

The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom
during the 15th Century

East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450

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The Ottoman Threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th Century

By

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We are also indebted to various institutions, professors, colleagues, and friends who offered us valuable support and suggestions during our work. Drafts of almost all chapters were previously presented over the last five years in various symposia, most of them organized by the “Stephen the Great” centre of research of Putna Monastery, created and developed by Professor Ștefan S. Gorovei. Research in the archives and libraries was made possible by the generous support of the Jagiellonian University (Krakow), the “New Europe College” (Bucharest) and of the *Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica* in Venice. We are enormously grateful to Professor Șerban Papacostea who encouraged us to continue the research and generously offered helpful suggestions on various topics.

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Introduction

Our aim was to write an international political history focused on the Central-Eastern-European context of the fifteenth century, based on two main ideas: the Ottoman threat and the Crusade. The first one has to do with the Ottoman conquest in Europe, often seen as an Islamic “holy war”, and the second concerns the Christendom’s “holy war”, including projects, negotiations and military actions. Our work focuses on the north-western Black Sea areas, where political interests were multiple and contradictory. The structure of the book highlights how the Ottoman expansion annihilated the Genoese-Venetian maritime hegemony and continued the Ottoman conquest of the northwestern Black Sea region, thus threatening Hungary and Poland. The Ottoman advance in the region generated actions and discussions concerning the need to defend the eastern border of Christendom, which our book focuses on, in the period spanning from the first Ottoman military actions to the peace of 1503. This peace settlement in fact acknowledged the Ottoman domination in the northwestern Black Sea area and accepted the Ottoman Empire as a legitimate diplomatic partner. We felt that a chronological approach suited our aims better and prompted our choice in building our arguments. At the same time, we have tried to reconstruct the political realities of the fifteenth century, taking into account a multitude of political, economic and religious aspects and attitudes within a unitary approach. We are aware that the abundance of details and information may restrict the access of the larger public to our book. Any other approach or simplification, however, would have distorted historical realities of the late medieval Eastern-Central Europe.

The Ottoman threat and the Crusade were mainly political themes, which Christian princes used and manipulated according to their interests, resulting on many occasions in a striking difference between political discourses and military actions. For this reason, the detailed presentation of the political context and the chronological structure are crucial in our view, as they emphasise that the interest for the Crusade and the Ottoman threat was not a constant one, but that it always depended on the political context. The Ottoman threat clearly was a historical reality but sometimes the rivalries between the Christian powers influenced the political discourse on the Ottoman threat and the need for a Crusade. Thus, such ambiguous situations arose when a Christian prince was, at the same time, a champion for the Crusade and in good relations with the sultan. Historians tend to approach the Crusade primarily from a Western perspective. This results in Central-Eastern Europe receiving certain general considerations, without any effort to understand the aims and strategies of the

political actors in the region. However, as we have tried to suggest in the book, the historical realities within the areas of conflict with the Ottomans are dramatically different from other European regions. Our book is dedicated first and foremost to Central and Eastern European history, with its particularities. Based on the information offered by a wide range of documentary and narrative sources, our aim was to reconstruct the complex political context of the fifteenth century crusading in Central and Eastern Europe and also to examine how events were interpreted by contemporaries.

The Sources

For the history of crusade in the fifteenth century, especially for Central and Eastern Europe, there are numerous and various diplomatic and narrative sources. At the end of the nineteenth century, V. A. Ulianiccki edited a volume of documents related to the Ottoman expansion toward Eastern Europe.¹ Nicolae Iorga had the idea of creating a collection dedicated exclusively to the fifteenth century crusades; he subsequently edited six volumes of documents from different European archives, mostly from Italy.² Documents preserved by Italian archives were thoroughly investigated in the second half of the nineteenth century, during the rise of national historiographies in Central and Eastern Europe. A large number of texts related to the relations between the Holy See and Hungary were published by A. Theiner.³ His work was completed by Vilmos Fraknói who published a volume dedicated to the correspondence between Matthias Corvinus and Sixtus IV.⁴ Recently, new documents discovered in the Vatican Archives were collected in a volume dedicated to studying Hungary's status role as a bulwark of Christendom.⁵ For Poland, Irena Sulkowska-Kuras and Stanislaw Kuras have published a new collection of documents from the

1 V. A. Улианицки (ed.), *Материалы для истории взаимных отношений Россіи, Польши, Молдавіи, Валахіи и Турціи* (Moscow, 1887).

2 N. Iorga (ed.), *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire de croisade au XV^e siècle*, 6 vol. (Paris-Vălenii de Munte, 1899–1916).

3 A. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta Historica Hungarum Sacram Illustrantia*, I (Rome, 1859); II, (Rome, 1860); *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, I, (Rome, 1860); II, (Rome, 1861).

4 Vilmos Fraknói (ed.), *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis Epistolae ad Romanos Pontifices*, (Monumenta Vaticana Historiam Regnum Hungariae Illustrantiam, VI, Budapest, 1891).

5 Edgár Artner (ed.), *Hungary as propugnaculum of Western Christianity. Documents for the Vatican Secrets Archives (ca 1214–1606)*, (Budapest-Rome, 2004).

Vatican archives. The volume includes abstracts of previously published texts but also the full version of previously unknown documents.⁶ Important issues are included in volumes concerning councils,⁷ religious orders,⁸ and the Orthodox Church as well.⁹ Other documents regarding the politics of the Holy See in Central-Eastern Europe and the importance of this region for the crusading projects were included in general and special collections of primary sources.¹⁰

The Venetian archives hold a large number of documents, as Venice was involved in many negotiations related to the crusades and was the capital of news in the early modern period. Thus, diplomatic reports, debates and decisions of the Venetian Senate were systematically published by historians starting with the nineteenth century. August Cieszkowski focused on documents about Poland,¹¹ N. Iorga on Venice's interests in the Black Sea,¹² while Enrico

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- 6 Irena Sulkowska-Kuras and Stanislaw Kuras (eds.), *Bullarium Poloniae*, III–VII, (Rome, 1988–2006).
- 7 Heinrich Finke (ed.), *Acta Concilii Constanciensis*, I, (Münster, 1896); Johann Haller (ed.), *Concilium Basiliense. Die Protokolle des Concils 1431–1433*, (Basel, 1897).
- 8 Lucas Waddingus, *Annales minorum seu trium Ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, editio tertia, IX, XII, (Quaracchi, 1932); Ulricus Hüntemann (ed.), *Bullarium franciscanum*, I, (nova serie), (Quaracchi, 1929).
- 9 Fr. Miklosich and Joseph Müller (eds.), *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani MCCCXV–MCCCCII*, II, (Viena, 1862); *Русская историческая библиотека*, VI, (St. Petersburg, 1880); Jean Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, (Paris, 1981).
- 10 M. Dogiel (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Regni Poloniae et Magnus Ducatus Lithuaniae*, I, (Vilnae, 1758); Edward Raczyński (ed.), *Kodex dyplomatyczny Litwy*, (Wrocław, 1845); *Памятники дипломатических сношений с Имперією Римскою*, I, (St. Petersburg, 1851); A. Lewicki, *Index actorum saeculi XV ad res publicas Poloniae spectantiam que quidem typis edita sunt*, (Krakow, 1888); A. Lewicki (ed.), *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti II*, (Krakow, 1891); A. Lewicki (ed.), *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti III*, (Krakow, 1894); Nagy Iván and Albert, B. Nyáry (eds.) *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Acta externa*, IV, (Budapest, 1877); Sime Ljubić (ed.), *Listine. O odnosajih između južnoga slavenska i mletacke republike*, (Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium), IV; V; XXV (Zagreb, 1874–1893); E. Hurmuzaki (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, I/1; I/2; II/2; VIII (Bucharest, 1891–1894); *Сборникъ Императорскаго Русскаго Историческаго Общества*, 35, 41, (St. Petersburg, 1882–1884).
- 11 August Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónów z archiwów weneckich. Cześć I", *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk Poznańskiego*, xv, (1887): 1–58; "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónów z archiwów weneckich. Cześć III", *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk Poznańskiego*, XIX, (1892): 1–73.
- 12 Nicolae Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră. III*, (Bucharest, 1914).

Cornet published a volume on the Venetian relations with Persia.¹³ Together with already known sources, the present book focuses, in the chapter related to the Ottoman campaign in Moldavia, on a number of overlooked Venetian reports written in 1484 by the Venetian representatives in Constantinople, the *bailo* Pietro Bembo and the Venetian secretary Giovanni Dario.¹⁴ Dario's reports were published in Italy by Giuseppe Calò,¹⁵ but his volume had, unfortunately, little impact. Pietro Bembo's reports, published in 2004 in a Romanian collective volume,¹⁶ also passed unnoticed. This oversight is partly set right in our work, as it shall become clear that these historical documents contain important data about the preliminaries, the preparations, and the consequences of the Ottoman expedition in 1484, a new insight into the balance of power in the Black Sea region at the end of the fifteenth century.

Other Italian archives offer similarly important documents, such as those edited by V. Macusev.¹⁷ L. T. Belgrano¹⁸ and Amedeo Vigna¹⁹ published documents related to the history of the Genoese colonies in the Black Sea, while G. Grasso was interested by the projects aimed, after 1476, to recover Crimea for its former masters.²⁰ Important information about Ottoman and Christian

13 Enrico Cornet, *Le guerre dei veneti nell' Asia, 1470–1474*, (Vienna, 1856).

14 Archivio di Stato Venezia, *Senato Secreto. Dispacci Costantinopoli*, F. 1A.

15 Giuseppe Calò (ed.), *22 Dispacci da Costantinopoli al doge Giovanni Mocenigo*, (Venice: Corbo e Fiore, 1992).

16 Ovidiu Cristea, "Campania din 1484 în lumina unor noi izvoare venețiene", în vol. *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Atlet al credinței creștine*, (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2004): 187–274.

17 V. Makusev (ed.), *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium Vicinorumque Populorum*, I, (Warsaw, 1874); II, (Belgrad, 1882).

18 L. T. Belgrano, "Prima serie di documenti riguardante la colonia di Pera", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, XIII (1884): 97–336.

19 Amedeo Vigna, "Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la Signoria di San Giorgio (1453–1475). Tomo primo", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VI (1868); "Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la signoria dell' Ufficio di S. Giorgio. Tomo II-parte primo", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VII/1 (1871); "Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la signoria dell' Ufficio di S. Giorgio. Tomo II-parte seconda", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VII/2 (1879); "Supplemento al codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la Signoria di San Giorgio (1453–1475)", (*Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VII/2 (1879).

20 G. Grasso, "Documenti riguardanti la costituzione di una lega contro il Turco nel 1481", *Giornale Ligustico di Archeologia, Storia de Belle Arte*, VI (1879).

military actions come also from the archives of Dubrovnik,²¹ Krakow,²² Lwow,²³ Sibiu²⁴ and Braşov.²⁵ We have included in our research the decisions of the imperial diets,²⁶ along with those of the Prussian Estates or of the Teutonic Order²⁷ and also the special volumes containing documents related to a historical personality,²⁸ or to a specific aspect of chancellery activity.²⁹ We should mention that many documents were published several times in different editions; in this book we chose to quote the edition that printed the full version of the texts.

The narrative sources also vary in style and substance. We used chronicles, historical and rhetorical texts written in Latin and other vernacular Western

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- 21 József Gelcich and Lajos Thallóczy (eds.), *Raguza és Magyarország összeköttetéseinek oklevéltára*, (Budapest, 1887).
- 22 Franciszek Piekosinski (ed.), *Kodecs dyplomatyczny miasta Krakowa, 1257–1506*, I, (Krakow, 1879).
- 23 *Akta grodzkie i ziemskie z czasów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z archiwum tak zwanego bernardyńskiego we Lwowie*, IV; VI; XIV (Lwow, 1873–1879).
- 24 Gustav Gündisch (ed.), *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, VI, (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1981).
- 25 I. Bogdan (ed.), *Documente privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Braşovul și cu Țara Ungurească în secolele XV–XVI* (Bucharest, 1905).
- 26 Wilhelm Altmann (ed.), *Regesta Imperii*, XI/1; XI/2, (Innsbruck, 1896–1900); Gustav Beckmann (ed.), *Deutsche Reichstagsakten König Albrecht II*, I/2, (Gotha: F. A. Perthes, 1916); Hermnann Wiesflecker (ed.), *Regesta Imperii*, XIV/2 (*Ausgewählte Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Maximilian I*), (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1993).
- 27 Karol Górski and Marian Biskup (eds.), *Akta Stanow Prus Krolewskich*, I; III/2, (Torun, 1955–1963); E. Weise (ed.), *Die Staatsverträge des Deutschen Ordens in Preussen in XV Jahrhundert*, III, (Marburg, 1966).
- 28 A. Prochaska (ed.), *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi Magni Ducis Lithuaniae 1370–1430*, (Krakow, 1882); Vilmos Fraknói (ed.), *Mátyás Király Levelei*, I–II, (Budapest, 1893–1895); I. Bogdan (ed.), *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, (Bucharest, 1903); Fryderyk Papée (ed.), *Akta Aleksandra*, (Krakow, 1927); Mihai Costăchescu (ed.), *Documente moldovenești înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, II, (Iași, 1932); Elemér Mályusz (ed.), *Zsigmondokori oklevéltár*, I, (Budapest, 1951); II/2, (Budapest, 1959); IV, (Budapest, 1994).
- 29 Eugenio Alberi (ed.), *Le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato durante il secolo decimosesto*, VI, (Florence, 1857); J. Caro, “Liber cancellariae Stanisłai Ciolek. Ein Formelbuch der polnischen Königskanzlei aus der Zeit der husitischen Bewegung”, *Archiv für Osterreichische Geschichte*, XLV (1871), 2: 319–545; Aleksander Jablonowski, *Sprawy wolo-skie na Jagiellonow: akta i listy*, (Warsaw, 1878); Jozsef Garbacik (ed.), *Materiały do dziejow dyplomacji polskiej z lat 1486–1516* (Wroclaw-Warsaw-Krakow, 1966).

languages,³⁰ Slavonic-Romanian³¹ and Russian,³² along with Byzantine³³ and Ottoman³⁴ chronicles translated in modern languages. One of the most significant for the purposes of this book is Jan Dlugosz's work, a remarkable history of Central-Eastern Europe in the fifteenth century. Dlugosz was a very well informed historian, who seemed to have had a balanced view on the facts even in circumstances which were not favourable to his country and king. Many of his assertions, once considered mere speculations, were proven to be accurate. For the sake of uniformity, we quoted his chronicle according to the edition from 1711,³⁵ but most of the fragments were confronted to the recent chronicle's critical edition.³⁶ The Venetian chronicles complete the picture of the fifteenth century as far as this book is concerned. Domenico Malipiero³⁷ and Marino Sanudo's annals³⁸ recorded the news that arrived to Venice, and they are crucial sources for understanding how news, even false or inaccurate ones, circulated in those times. Moreover, they represent a good indicator of the manner in which political realities from Central-Eastern Europe were received and known in Western Europe.

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- 30 Johannes Sacranus, *Errores atrocissimorum ruthenorum*, (Köln, 1508); *Historie di Messer Marco Guazzo*, (Venice, 1545); *Commentarii delle cose de'Turchi di Paulo Giovio e Andrea Cambini*, (Venice, 1541); *De i commentarii del viaggio in Persia di M. Caterino Zeno*, (Venezia, 1558); Donaldo da Lezze, *Historia Turchesca*, ed. I. Ursu, (Bucharest, 1910); Kumaniecki, Casimir Felix (ed.), *Philippi Callimachi rhetorica*, (Warsaw, 1950); Kallimach, F., *Ad Innocentium VIII de bello Turcis inferendo oratio*, ed. I. Lichońska and T. Kowalewski, (Warsaw, 1964); Ludwik Erlich (ed.), *Pisma wybrane Pawła Włodkowica*, I, (Warsaw, 1969).
- 31 P. P. Panaiteșcu (ed.), *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV–XVI*, (Bucharest, 1959).
- 32 *Полное собрание русских летописей*, II, (St. Petersburg, 1843); VIII, (St. Petersburg, 1859), XVII, (St. Petersburg, 1907), XXXIV, (Moscow, 1978); XXVI, (Moscow, 1959).
- 33 Doukas, *The Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, ed. by Harry J. Magoulas, (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1975); Vitalien Laurent (ed.), *Les « memoires » du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438–1439)*, (Rome, 1971); Theodor Spandounes, *On the origin of the Ottoman Emperors*, ed. Donald M. Nicol, (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- 34 Jan Łoś (ed.), *Pamiętniki janczara, czyli kronika turecka Konstantego z Ostrowicy, napisana między r. 1496 a 1501*, (Krakow, 1912); Mihai Guboglu and Mustafa A. Mehmed (eds.), *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, I (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1966).
- 35 Joannes Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I–II, (Lipsiae, 1711–1712).
- 36 Joannis Dlugossii, *Annales seu cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*, (Warsaw-Krakow, 1964–2005).
- 37 Domenico Malipiero, *Annali veneti dall' anno 1457 al 1500*, (Archivio Storico Italiano, VII/1, Firenze, 1843).
- 38 *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. I ed. by Federico Stefani, (Venice, 1879), vol. IV, ed. by Nicolò Barozzi, (Venice, 1880); vol. V, ed. by Federico Stefani, (Venice, 1881).

Ottoman Threat and Crusading

Scholarly literature dedicated to the Middle Ages gives a prominent place to crusade studies; this particular type of “Holy War” has remained a popular topic with medievalists after almost two centuries of systematic research. The high level of interest by scholars for the crusades, as well as the need for reinterpreting certain aspects of crusading history, were strongly influenced by the cultural and political ideas of the historical periods in which various scholars worked. The same episodes of crusading history have been seen successively as examples of a holy war for the defense of Christianity and European civilization, as a triumph against evil or, on the contrary, as the result of barbarism and religious intolerance and as a starting point in the history of colonialism.³⁹

The Crusade seen as a modern phenomenon highlights the powerful impact crusading has had upon European thought and the fact that every new generation has interpreted the past from the perspective of the present, which in turn has projected the present into the past.⁴⁰ Concurrently, the influences of the *Zeitgeist* generated scholarly debates and enforced the critical re-evaluation of the crusade at theoretical and conceptual levels,⁴¹ a fact which brought about a significant widening of this research field. The debate over the origins of the idea of crusading often emphasized social and economic factors⁴² but they nevertheless did not supersede the preeminence of the religious factor.⁴³ Scholars argued that there was a profound paradigm shift, operated by the medieval Catholic Church whilst switching from a centuries-old negative view of

39 *Seven Myths of the Crusades*, eds. Alfred G. Andrea and Andrew Holt, (Cambridge-Indianapolis, 2015), *passim*.

40 Christopher Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom. Holy War and the Crusades*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), 190.

41 T. S. R. Boase, “Recent Developments in Crusading Historiography”, *History*, 22 (1937): 110–125; J. L. La Monte, “Some Problems in Crusading Historiography”, *Speculum*, 15 (1940), 1: 57–75; Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading*, (Oxford, 1985); Ernst-Dieter Hehl, “Was ist eigentlich ein Kreuzzug?”, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 259 (1994), 2: 297–336; Giles Constable, “The Historiography of the Crusades”, *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and Muslim World*, ed. Angeliki E. Layou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh, (Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 1–22; Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*, (Blackwell Publishing, 2006); Christopher Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades*, (Manchester University Press, 2011).

42 Carl Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens*, (Stuttgart, 1935); English version *The Origin of the idea of Crusade*, transl. by Marshall W. Baldwin and Walter Goffart (Princeton University Press, 1977).

43 Jonathan-Riley Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, (Continuum: London, 2003).

bloodshed by Christians to the consecration of the use of weapons in the era of the crusades. Gradually the concept of a “Just War” laid a foundation for the further development of a new type of war, more specifically the “Holy War”.⁴⁴

The study of the crusades involves, in addition to political and military aspects, an important ecclesiological dimension, which refers to the institutional role of the Catholic Church in theological debates and the evolution of canon law in the era.⁴⁵ Later interpretations of the crusades often had an important propagandistic component,⁴⁶ with both powerful implications for the construction of European identity⁴⁷ as well as European ideologies.⁴⁸

The different manner in which historians have approached the question of what makes a crusade distinguishable from other types of holy war has led to the identification of three categories of scholars, namely: the traditionalists, the pluralists, and the generalists. Naturally, many historians cannot be included in one group alone. Furthermore, in many situations, they avoided a strict conceptual affiliation, basing their analyses mainly on empiricism or on developing personal concepts, in turn influenced by the particularities of the region and of the period they studied. For traditionalists, the crusade is strictly connected with the question of the Holy places. They consider that similar forms of holy war, such as the Spanish Reconquista and the effort to defend Europe against the Ottoman threat were exterior to the crusade phenomenon or, at most, corrupted forms of it. Pluralists regard the crusade as a unitary phenomenon, considering the Papacy’s role in initiating and supporting crusades as determinant. This perspective relies on Bernard of Clairvaux’s vision who, whilst preaching the Second Crusade, had highlighted repeatedly that any action against the enemies of the faith could be considered a crusade.⁴⁹ Finally,

44 Jean Flori, *La guerre sainte. La formation de l'idée de croisade dans l'Occident chrétien*, (Paris, 2001).

45 M. Villey, “L'idée de la croisade chez les juristes du Moyen-Age”, *Storia del Medioevo*, 111, (Florence, 1955), 565–594; Jose Goni Gaztambide, *Historia de la bula de la cruzanda en Espagna*, (Vitoria, 1958); Ane L. Bysted, *The Crusade Indulgence. Spiritual Rewards and the Theology of the Crusades, c. 1095–1216*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015); *Le Papauté et les croisades/The Papacy and the Crusades*, ed. Michel Balard, (London-New York: Routledge, 2015).

46 Palmer Allan Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade: A Study of Public Opinion and Crusade Propaganda*, (Amsterdam, 1940); Christoph T. Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology. Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

47 Alphonse Dupront, *Le mythe de croisade*, 4 vol., (Gallimard, 1997).

48 Paul Rousset, *Histoire d'une ideologie. La croisade*, (Lausanne, 1983).

49 Giles Constable, “The Second Crusade as seen by contemporaries”, *Traditio*, 9 (1953): 213–279.

the historians surnamed “generalists”⁵⁰ embrace a critical position towards traditionalism and pluralism, insisting on the origins and evolution of the concept of holy war and its subsequent transformation into crusade, thus creating a theological doctrine. Generalist broadly define crusading as holy war, not necessary proclaimed by the pope, because the crusaders believed they were fighting under the direct authority of God.⁵¹ From a chronological perspective, these controversies determined a differentiated approach to the crusades after the recovery of the Holy Land. We argue that there was an alteration of the crusade ideal, a significant change in the approach to crusading strategy,⁵² followed by an “autumn of the crusade,”⁵³ or the “later crusades,” which maintained the ideal of freeing the Holy Land but which also became an instrument of the papacy, to be used for other purposes.⁵⁴

Crusading has recaptured the historians’ interest over the last fifty years, during which a substantial number of publications have been written on this topic. To a great extent this reawakened interest was sparked by the work of the pluralist school of Crusade historians, effectively launched by Jonathan Riley-Smith’s *What where the Crusades?* published in 1977. Riley-Smith’s many books and articles revolutionised the study of the crusades, demonstrating that the movement was not merely about the recovery of the Holy Land, but a far more complex phenomenon with a lasting presence in the history of Christian Europe. In the pluralist perspective, crusading ended in Northern Europe with the triumph of the Reformation, while in South-Eastern Europe it continued well into the sixteenth century. A crusade, as historians of the pluralist school define it, was any war proclaimed and supported by the papacy, for which indulgences were granted, and privileges were published and preached. Even the critics of the pluralist position, who reproached the pluralists’ polemic aggressiveness, recognise the important role played by this historiographical direction, despite its limitations.⁵⁵

The arguments presented in our book embrace the pluralist definition of the crusade, but they are nevertheless influenced by historical works which precede pluralism as well. Nicolae Iorga collected an impressive amount

50 Constable, “The Historiography of the Crusades”, 14–15.

51 Alfred J. Andrea and Andrew Holt, “Once More into the Breach: the Continuing War against Crusade Myths”, *Seven Myths of the Crusades*, xviii.

52 Sylvia Schein, *Fideles Crucis: The Papacy, the West, and the Recovery of the Holy Land, 1274–1314*, (Oxford University Press, 1991), 267–269.

53 Franco Cardini, *Le crociate tra il mito e la storia*, (Rome, 1971), 293 sqq.

54 Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580: from Lyons to Alcazar*, (Oxford, 1992).

55 Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades*, 232–233.

of primary sources concerning the fifteenth century conflicts that he saw as crusades.⁵⁶ To Iorga's position we might add the controversy between Aziz Suryal Atiya and Francisc Pall. Atiya considered the Nicopolis crusade to have been the last serious Christian attempt to banish the Ottomans from Europe and to reconquer Jerusalem.⁵⁷ On the contrary, F. Pall argued that the idea of reconquering Jerusalem was still present in the fifteenth century crusades, but the main preoccupation was to defend Christendom against the Ottoman expansion; according to his view the crusade became associated with the defense of Europe.⁵⁸ "The Balkan crusades"⁵⁹ were also framed as attempts to save Byzantium from the Ottoman conquest. Moreover, historians such as Kenneth M. Setton⁶⁰ and Norman Housley⁶¹ have dedicated important works to the later crusades and the Ottoman threat, but the subject is far from being exhausted. Norman Housley, for instance, coordinated a collective volume dedicated to crusading in the fifteenth century, which impresses with the multiple and various aspects brought into discussion.⁶² In another recent volume, dedicated to crusading and the Ottoman threat, Norman Housley highlighted the increased interest in medieval crusading in Central and Eastern European states as well, in the aftermath of the Cold War and collapse of the Communist regimes.⁶³ We may add that in the past fifteen years, in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, interest in the subject of crusading has increased significantly as part of a deeper interest in historic relations between the West and the Muslim world during the age of the "War on Terror," which itself is seen in some quarters of the Muslim world as a type of modern crusade. In correlation with the increased appeal of medieval crusading, we are witnessing the production of a very high number of modern studies, and some of them offer a romanticized vision of the crusading that is quite remote from the fifteenth century realities. Our intention is not to debate over this aspect, but to highlight the fact that the exclusive attention paid to the irreducible rivalry

56 La Monte, "Some Problems in Crusading Historiography": 59.

57 Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Crusade in the Late Middle Ages*, (London, 1938), 480.

58 Francisc Pall, "Les Croisades en Orient au Bas Moyen Age. Observations critiques sur l'ouvrage de M. Atiya", *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, XIX (1942), 2: 577–578.

59 Massimo Viglione, "*Deus Vult?*" *Cambiamento e persistenza dell'idea di Crociata nella Chiesa da II Concilio di Lione alla morte di Pio II (1274–1464)*, (Rome, 2014), 67–81.

60 Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, I, II, (Philadelphia, 1976–1978).

61 Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580. From Lyons to Alcazar*, (Oxford, 1992).

62 Norman Housley (ed.), *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century. Message and Impact*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

63 Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505*, (Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–6.

between Christianity and Islam and the ignorance of the political realities from the East European region may generate a completely misleading image.

Beyond the ideal of defending the Christian faith, important political considerations were involved for those who participated in the medieval crusading movement. Embracing the crusading ethos could lead to political ascension and legitimation, but very often behind a ruler's declarations or vows that he would fight to death against the enemies of Christendom laid various political interests that conflicted with crusading ideology. The best examples are John Hunyadi,⁶⁴ and his son, Matthias Corvinus, who resorted to a skillful crusade rhetoric while their true intentions were quite different.⁶⁵ This is why beyond the surviving correspondence with the Holy See, crusade bulls, crusade preaching and military actions, the political objectives and the rivalries between the Christian princes that underlaid such efforts are essential both for understanding the political realities of those times as well as the failure of the crusades. Our work highlights less known aspects of crusading efforts in Eastern Europe and the complex relation between crusading, as a common ideal and form of Christian solidarity, and the political interests of the participants, which often diverged. These considerations, collected in a unitary vision and systematised according to the fifteenth century criteria and not modern geopolitics, will definitely interest researchers concerned with the complexity of the crusading phenomenon and the political realities of Central and Eastern Europe. We put forward new considerations regarding the complexity of the frontiers of the Latin Christendom, seen from the perspective of the relations between Catholics and Eastern-Orthodox faithful. Representations of those frontiers and those relationships were manipulated for the purposes political propaganda. The crusade as a means of bringing about the solidarity of all Christians against a common enemy was an integral part of the Latin Christendom's system of values, and there were many who believed in its validity.

We must take into account that modern perspectives over the Ottoman expansion had changed dramatically during the last decades, evolving from the classical view of a confrontation between religions and civilizations, to an integration of Ottoman history as part of the European history.⁶⁶ On the one

64 Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*, (London: Tauris, 2001), 286–287.

65 Benjamin Weber, "La croisade impossible: Étude sur les relations entre Sixte IV et Mathias Corvin (1471–1484)", *Byzance et ses périphéries: Hommage à Alain Ducellier*, ed. Bernard Doumerc and Christophe Picard, (Toulouse, 2004), 320–321.

66 Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

hand, some historians have argued that the “Europeanization” of the Ottoman political and social history, inspired by the tendency towards globalization in contemporary society, is a dangerous path which may lead to the falsification of history.⁶⁷ On the other hand, integrating Ottoman history into European history can begin with the consideration of the Ottomans image in European culture⁶⁸ and the growing interest displayed by Europeans in the origins and civilization of the Ottomans, albeit mixing apocalyptic traditions with historical events.⁶⁹ Ottoman history suits many categories for the history of “the other”.

According to the *ghazi* thesis, the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic empire, founded by warriors who were devoted to the cause of spreading Islam throughout the infidels’ territories. The Ottoman State was built upon the Holy War ideology (*ghaza*) and it raised by attracting Muslim warriors (*ghazi*) to conquer Christian territories. Founded at the borderlands between Islam and Christianity, the Ottoman Empire was a *ghazi* state whose perpetual task was Holy War against the Christians.⁷⁰ On the other hand, criticism of the *ghazi* thesis insists upon different meanings of terms *ghaza* and *ghazi* during the Ottoman Empire history and the concept of *ghaza* underwent transformation in Ottoman thought.⁷¹ Heath Lowry argued that, during fourteenth and fifteenth century, both terms—*ghaza/ghazi*—had a nonreligious meaning, being synonymous with *akin/akinci*. Lowry differentiated between the secular *ghaza* of the frontier warriors and the religious *ghaza* of Ottoman intellectuals, because the *akinci* troops, emblematic for *ghaza* ideology, did not include Muslims exclusively. A great number of *akingi* were Christians and they fought for plunder, not in the name of Muslim faith.⁷² In other words, the Ottoman frontiers were not the frontiers of Islam, and they cannot be reduced only at a holy war of *ghazi* in the territories named “abode of war” (*dar-ul-harb*), to expand the “abode of Islam” (*dar-ul-Islam*) in the non-Muslim territories.

67 Pál Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire. The Ottomans in Central Europe—A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)*, (Budapest, 2015), 20.

68 Andrei Pippidi, *Visions of the Ottoman World in Renaissance Europe*, (Columbia University Press, 2013).

69 Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought*, (Harvard University, Press, 2008).

70 Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, (London, 1967), 5–54; Colin Imber, “Paul Wittek’s « De la défaite d’Ankara à la prise de Constantinople »”, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, v (1986): 65–81.

71 Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds. The Construction of the Ottoman State*, (Berkeley, 1995), 84–92.

72 Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, (Albany, 2003), 45–52.

Of course, *ghaza* was a source of power and prestige in the Ottoman world, but the Ottoman Empire was nevertheless not an Orthodox Islamic state. The administration of the Ottoman realm was not based exclusively on the Islamic law, but also on the law of the state and of its ruler. The Ottomans did not follow the politics of the permanent war imposed by *ghaza*. Furthermore, they granted rights to the non-Muslim population, they respected the existing customs and „agreements” and paid a lot more attention to their own political interests than to religious demands.⁷³ It is evident to us that it will be wrong to approach the question of the Ottoman threat and of the crusade in terms of a brutal confrontation between the Muslim and Christian fervour. From such a perspective, the history of the crusade appears as a long succession of failures; the noble ideals being progressively abandoned on behalf of petty ambitions. In fact, the historical reality was far more complex and the fact that the Christian sovereigns followed their interests should not surprise us. Thus, despite recent critics concerning the “traditional” political history, the reconstruction, as complete as possible, of the political context provides the adequate framework for the interpretation of the late crusades and of the Ottoman threat. Hence, the same event could have been understood differently by the contemporaries and by historians. The battle of Belgrade (1456), for instance, represents a good example in this respect. According to Norman Housley, that battle was “the greatest crusading victory over the Turks in the fifteenth century”.⁷⁴ Of course, the contemporary celebrations of victory and the events after the conquest of Belgrade by Ottomans in 1521 justify such a conclusion. Even if it was not a decisive military success, the Ottoman setback in 1456 put a stop to the sultan’s expansion in Central Europe for more than half a century. However, the Ottoman perspective upon the events was a different one. In 1457, when Mehmed II ordered a final assault on Belgrade, the frontier warriors of the Balkans protested. “If Belgrade is conquered”, they said, “we will have to plow the land”.⁷⁵ Such a statement, included in a Ottoman chronicle, should not be taken at its face value; however, it reveals the divergent perspectives between the sultans and his subjects’ concerning the conquests in Christian Europe. Moreover, the defeat of Belgrade had no serious consequences for the Ottomans, as in a few years time the Empire resumed its expansion both in Asia and Europe.

73 A. Nuri Yurdusev, “The Ottoman Attitude toward Diplomacy”, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?* ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 14–16.

74 Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 103.

75 Kafadar, *The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 147.

The ideology of Islamic expansion through war against the “infidels” played an important role in legitimating the sultans’ dominion, but it was combined with a remarkable pragmatism stemming from the structure of the Ottoman political elite and the particular manner of making political decisions.⁷⁶ The Ottomans knew how to appeal to local aristocracy and integrate it within the Ottoman military system. They also understood the rivalry between the Catholics and the Orthodox faithful, setting themselves up as protectors of the latter.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Ottoman military organization incorporated many Christian elements, just as Christians were used in the administrative structures of empire.⁷⁸ It is also worth noting that in the fifteenth century, the most powerful enemies of the Ottomans were Muslim rulers, and the sympathy that Timur Lenk, or Uzun Hasan, allegedly had for the Christians was an illusion.⁷⁹ Clearly, the pillaging, the destruction, and dramatic military confrontations between Ottomans and Christians were real and painful and cannot be ignored, but, at the same time, through different channels, the Christian and Ottoman rulers looked for a peaceful solution.

Frontier Societies and the Eastern Border of Christendom

From a geographic viewpoint, the book focuses on Ottoman expansion in the northern Black Sea region, a secondary front from the perspective of the contemporary historiography, compared to the Central Europe one, but nevertheless equally important from the perspective of the fifteenth century. Described as a “plaque tournante” of international commerce at late Middle Ages,⁸⁰ the Black Sea became attractive for European merchants after the conquest of

76 Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, (London: Tauris, 2004).

77 Halil Inalcik, *Essays in Ottoman History*, (Istanbul, 1998).

78 Mariya Kiprovska, “Ferocious Invasion or Smooth Incorporation? Integrated the Established Balkan Military System into the Ottoman Army”, *The Ottoman Conquest of the Balkans. Interpretations and Research Debates*, ed. Jens-Oliver Schmitt, (Vienna, 2015), 77–100.

79 Such views had as precedents the myth of Prester John, or the diplomatic contacts with the Mongol Empire. Still in 1300 many Christian believed that Ilkhan Gazan will deliver Jerusalem in the hands of Papacy. See Sylvia Schein, “Gesta Dei per Mongolos 1300. The genesis of a non-event”, *English Historical Review*, 94 (1979): 805–819.

80 G. Brătianu, “La Mer Noire, plaque tournante du trafic international à la fin de Moyen Age”, *Revue Historique Sud-Est Européen*, XXI (1944): 36–69.

Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204.⁸¹ With the temporary removal of the Byzantine Empire's authority, which encumbered access to the Asian markets, the Black Sea area evolved to become vital for Euro-Asian commerce, a fact which generated powerful political rivalries and military confrontations. The most prominent was the fight for hegemony between the Genoese and the Venetians, a long-lasting confrontation which ended only with the Ottoman domination in the Black Sea. However, the struggle for hegemony in the Black Sea area was complex and involved many Christian and Muslim powers. Moreover, despite the religious differences, on various occasions the Christians allied with Muslims against Christians, and Muslims allied with Christians against Muslims.

From the mid-thirteenth century onwards, the political expansion and the commercial exploration and exploitation of the Pontic area led to the advance of the Latin Christendom towards the east, even though it consisted in fact of a network of fortresses and commercial centres in a vast territory dominated by the Mongols. Alongside merchants, Franciscan and Dominican monks traveled long the trade routes all the way to central Asia in an impressive effort of evangelization enabled by the foundation of new ecclesiastical structures.⁸² Moreover, after the great Tartar invasion of the mid-thirteenth century, which produced serious damages at Christendom's eastern border, the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland had resumed the offensive toward the east with the intention of taking control of the commercial land routes that connected northern and central Europe with the Italian colonies of the Black Sea. Directly or indirectly, the crusade was linked to these economic and religious interests in the Black Sea, whether we consider the relations between Genoa and the duchy of Burgundy,⁸³ or those of Venice with the Tartars and the khanate Ak koyunlu.⁸⁴ Eventually, the installation of Ottoman political and economic hegemony in the Black Sea affected altogether the interests of Genoa, Venice, Poland and Hungary.

81 Şerban Papacostea, "La Mer Noire: du monopole byzantin à la domination des Latins aux Détroits", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 27 (1988), 1–2: 49–71; M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII^e–début du XV^e siècle)*, 2 vol., (Rome, 1978); E. Basso, *Genova, un impero sul mare*, (Cagliari, 1994).

82 Jean Richard, "Les papes d'Avignon et l'évangélisation de monde non-latine a la veille du Grande Schisme", *Genèse et débuts du Grand Schisme d'Occident*, (Paris, 1980), 305–306.

83 Jacques Paviot, "« Croisade » bourguignonne et interets genois en Mer Noire au milieu du XV^e siècle", *Studi di storia medioevale e di diplomatica*, 12–13 (1992): 135–162.

84 Enrico Cornet, *Le guerre dei veneti nell' Asia, 1470–1474*, (Vienna, 1856).

Given these conditions, the Eastern border of Christendom was a vast area of confrontations between divergent interests and not simply a military frontier between Christians and Muslims. The notion of frontier is not limited only to the military aspects, for it represents, same as the crusade and the Ottoman threat, the object of a conceptual re-evaluation. Recently, historians have paid more attention to “frontier societies,” a controversial concept grounded in Frederick Turner’s much-debated theory of frontiers. In his view, the frontier is not only a simple boundary between states; it is the focus of expansion that in turn leads to social transformation.⁸⁵ In recent works, the “frontier” thesis has undergone significant revision and is now somewhat removed from Turner’s original concept. Even though historians continue to approach it as a militarised space,⁸⁶ the frontier is also view as a zone of mediation and intense cultural and economic exchange.⁸⁷ It has become clear that the task of defending Christendom led to the development of a “frontier ideology,” yet there is an important distinction between concept and reality.⁸⁸ Examining the connections between Christendom’s frontier societies and crusading, Norman Housley noticed that these frontiers present a highly complex phenomenon which cannot be conceptualised in terms of a simple line of cleavage or clash of civilizations.⁸⁹ The application of theoretical concepts about the frontier is not an easy one and divergent approaches appear even when scholars discuss the same historical reality. A volume of studies dedicated to the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier insists upon its military character and considers that the use of the concept of “frontier society”, in this case, leads to a historical construction which has less to do with the historical realities of those times.⁹⁰ By contrast, a book dedicated to the same topic argues that, beyond its military importance, the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier was, from an economic and social

85 Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, (Mineola-New York: Dover Publications, 2010), 3–4.

86 *War and Border Societies in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anthony Tuck and Anthony Goodman, New York, 1992.

87 *Medieval Frontier Societies*, Robert Bartlett, Angus MacKay, Oxford, 1989; *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend, (Aldershot, 2002).

88 Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims and “Pagans” in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c.1300*, (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

89 Norman Housley, “Frontier Societies and Crusading in the Late Middle Ages”, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, x (1995): 104–119.

90 *Ottomans, Hungarians and Habsburgs in Central Europe: the Military Confines in the Era of Ottoman Conquest*, ed. Geza David and Pal Fodor, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2000), 12.

perspective, an area of dynamic transition which ensured the encounter and interaction between different people and states.⁹¹

In referring to the Eastern border of Christendom, we do not mean a line between Christendom and Islam, analogous to a modern frontier, but a formula which was used in ecclesiastical and political rhetoric with an ideological rather than geographical meaning. The borders of Christendom were closely connected to the territorialisation of Western Christendom and to theories of papal rule in which the Roman Catholic Church was identified with the *Respublica christiana*, organised in a feudal hierarchy, with the Pope at its head as the source of imperial and royal power.⁹² Pagan or schismatic rulers were thus seen as illegitimate, and the Papacy supported the conquest and conversion of their lands. Regarding the Eastern border of Christendom, Poland and Hungary submitted to papal authority in return for protection and support in internal conflicts. In the thirteenth century, this submission was expressed by their agreement to allow the Teutonic Knights to settle in their lands under the direct authority of the Holy See, which afterwards proved inconvenient for both kingdoms. After the great Mongol invasion, the two kingdoms defended once more the eastern border, and the Papacy preached a crusade against the Mongols and the need to defend the borders of Christendom. In turn, the Papacy used their political ambitions to support missionary activity in the East and to counter-balance the growing influence of the Holy Roman Empire which was threatening its own authority. The ideology of defending Christendom was created by dressing up local political interests in Papal ideology, and the kings of the frontier realms used it to strengthen their own power and to claim a central place in the mental geography of Christendom.⁹³

Hungary and Poland were both identified as the “bulwark of Christendom” against the Ottoman threat, yet only Hungary confronted directly the Ottoman expansion. The formula was not a strict expression of geopolitical reality but rather reflected the relationship between the pope and each kingdom, often used to remind the kings of their duty towards Christendom. The “gateway of Christendom,” similarly to the “bulwark of Christendom,” were seen at the time as zones of permanent conflict with the enemies of Christianity, so that other

91 Mark L. Stein, *Guarding the Frontier. Ottoman Forts and Garrisons in Europe*, (London: Tauris, 2007); but see also the critic review of Gabor Agoston in *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 52 (2009), 159–163.

92 Raffaello Morghen, *Medioevo cristiano*, third edition, (Bari, 1962), 138–139.

93 Nora Berend, “Défense de la Chrétienté et naissance d’une identité: Hongrie, Pologne et péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge”, *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58 (2003), 5: 1026–1027.

Christians had a duty to come to their aid.⁹⁴ From the mid-thirteenth century, Hungary had adopted the status of the “gateway to Christendom,” with the process closely reflected in the conscious use of the frontier rhetoric to strengthen royal power.⁹⁵ With the rise of the Ottoman Empire, Hungary shifted from being a “gateway to Christendom” to a “bastion of Christendom”, a key term for the “defensive” crusade which Hungary waged against the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁶ The kingdom of Poland was similarly called *antemurale Christianitatis* starting from the fifteenth century, with the expression linked to its mission to defend Christendom’s Eastern frontier.⁹⁷ Although the term was initially related to the double kingship of Władislas III, it was also used to refer to Poland alone in 1462, when Pope Pius II used the terms *scutum*, *murus* and *antemurale* for Poland as “honorific metaphors” with a clearly political purpose. The Pope wanted Poland to join the coalition against the Ottomans⁹⁸ but King Casimir IV was much more preoccupied with his own dynastic problems than with his realm’s role as bastion of Christendom.⁹⁹ After 1444, Poland avoided any serious involvement in crusade projects, a decision which was somehow ambiguous. Since it claimed a position as *antemurale Christianitatis*, at least against the Tartars, Poland could not refuse Rome’s call to crusade, but at the same time took no part in the wars against the Ottomans.¹⁰⁰

Moldavia too was considered as a “gate of Christendom.” Ruled by a Greek-Orthodox prince, vassal to the king of Poland and tributary to the sultan, Moldavia represents a special case from the perspective of embracing crusading rhetoric and of the political game played by the Moldavian ruler amongst the divergent interests of the neighbouring states, including adhesion for the

94 Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400–1536*, (Oxford, 2002), 16–17.

95 Nora Berend, “Hungary, the gate of Christendom”, *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. David Abulafia and Nora Berend, (Aldershot, 2002), 195–215.

96 János M. Bak, “Hungary and Crusading in the Fifteenth Century”, *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century*, p. 118.

97 Paul W. Knoll, “Poland as *Antemurale Christianitatis* in the Late Middle Ages”, *The Catholic Historical Review* 60 (1974), 3: 381–401.

98 Wictor Weintraub, “Renaissance Poland and *Antemurale Christianitatis*”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* VIII–IX, (1979–1980), 2: 921–922.

99 Krzysztof Baczkowski, “Gli stati dell’unione Jagiellonica nel XV–XVI secolo, *antemurale Christianitatis* o il ponte tra Oriente ed Occidente”, *Itinerari di Ricerca Storica* 16 (2002): 51–57; Malgorzata Morawiec, “*Antemurale Christianitatis*. Polen als Vormauer des Christlichen Europa”, *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte* 2 (2001): 249–260.

100 Janusz Smolucha, “Między Warna a Mohaczem: Zagrożenie tureckie w Polsce w świetle wibranych traktatów”, *Studia Historyczne* 38 (1995), 4: 459–479.

crusade and the military collaboration with the Ottomans.¹⁰¹ From Prince Stephen the Great's viewpoint, Moldavia's position as the "gate of Christendom" resided not only in crusading rhetoric but in a concrete plan to defend the fortresses of Kilia¹⁰² and Akkerman,¹⁰³ whose conquest by the Ottomans would

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- 101 Liviu Pilat, "Between Ottoman Empire and Latin Christendom: Moldavia as Frontier Society in the Late Middle Ages", *Europe and the "Ottoman World". Exchanges and Conflicts (Sixteenth to Seventeenth)*, ed. G. Karman and Radu G. Păun, (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2013), 171–193.
- 102 Kilia (today Kiliya, in Ukraine) appears in documents with different names (Chieli, Licostomo) and, despite the controversies aroused by its localization, it defines a strategic area rather than a castle. Concerning the localization, there are three hypothesis, which seem to correspond to the change of the political control over this region. Thus there is a Genoese castle, Licostomo, taken by the Byzantines and situated on an island where the Danube discharges into the Black Sea, Chilia Veche, south of the arm of Kilia, having a connection with Walachia's control in the region and Chilia Nouă, situated north of the arm of Danube, which bears the same name, on the Moldavian territory. No matter of the geographic position, the role of the settlement was the same, namely a juncture between Central Europe's terrestrial roads and the maritime routes from the Black Sea, whence Hungary's interest for this strategic point (N. Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chilieii și Cetății Albe*, (Bucharest, 1899); P. P. Panaitescu, "Legăturile moldo-polone în secolul XV și problema Chilieii", *Romanoslavica*, III (1958): 95–115; O. Iliescu, "Localizarea vechiului Licostomo", *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, XXV (1972), 3: 435–462; G. Airaldi, "I Genovesi a Licostomo nel sec. XIV", *Studi Medievali*, XIII (1972), II, (terza serie): 967–981; Șerban Papacostea, "Kilia et la politique orientale de Sigismund de Luxembourg", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, xv (1976), 3: 429–430; Ștefan Andreescu, "Une ville disputée: Kilia pendant la première moitié du XV^e siècle", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXIV (1985), 3: 217–230; Petre Diaconu, "Kilia et Licostomo ou Kilia-Licostomo", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXV (1986), 4: 301–317; Mihnea Berindei, "L' Empire Ottoman et la « route moldave » avant la conquête de Chilia et de Cetatea Albă (1484)", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, xxx (1991), 3–4: 161–188; Gh. Pungă, "Considerații privitoare la Chilia Nouă", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A.D. Xenopol"*, XXIV (1997): 365–380).
- 103 Akkerman (today Bilgorod-Dnistrovskiy, in Ukraine) is the name that the fortress placed where Dniester discharges into the Black Sea received after the Ottoman conquest, but for the uniformity reasons we will use especially this name in our book. Previously to the Ottoman conquest, it is mentioned as Asprokastron, Maurokastron, Moncastro, Albicastrum, Fejervar, Wiestadt, Bialgorod, Cetatea Albă. The fortress ensures the connection with the commercial road from Lwow, a safer alternative than the "Tartar road" that led to Crimea. In undeterminable conditions, the fortress passed from under the control of Tartars to the one of the Genoese rule and at late 14th century under the control of Moldavian voievode. Up to the Ottoman conquest, the city had autonomous organization and the right to mint its own coin, but the castle was defended by a Moldavian military garrison. Some historians accept the existence of two fortresses, situated on Dniester's both banks, which would explain the almost simultaneous use of the names



FIGURE 1 Kilia (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, fund Revan f. 8 recto).

have jeopardised Moldavia, Hungary, Poland, and all of Christendom. In this case, the coincidence with the Ottoman political rhetoric indicates a military frontier, visible not only because of the permanent military confrontations, but because of the interest in controlling a certain strategic point. According to the Serbian janissary's chronicle, sultan Mehmed II was convinced of the fact that, as long as the Hungarians controlled Belgrade and the Moldavians

white fortress and black fortress (Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chiliei și Cetății Albe*, *passim*; N. Bănescu, "Maurocastrum – Moncastrum – Cetatea Albă", *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, III series, Bucharest, 1940, 165–178; Matei Cazacu, "A propos de l'expansion polono-lituanienne au nord de la Mer Noire aux XIV^e–XV^e siècle: Czarnigrad, la "Cité Noire" de l'embouchure du Dniestr", *Passé turco-tatar. Present sovietique. Etudes offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*, ed. Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejray, G. Veinstein and S. E. Wimbush, (Louvain-Paris, 1986), 99–122; Șerban Papacostea, "Maurocastrum și Cetatea Albă: identitatea unei așezări medievale", *Revista Istorică*, VI (1995), 11–12: 911–915).



FIGURE 2 Akkerman (*Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, fund Revan, f. 8 verso*).

Akkerman, Poland and Hungary would be protected, and the Ottoman expansion would fail.¹⁰⁴ As the chronicle was written in late fifteenth century, after the Ottoman conquest of the two fortresses, it is debatable whether the chronicler managed to faithfully reproduce the sultan's words, but in 1484 Bayezid II described the conquest of Kilia and Akkerman in the same terms. In the letters announcing the sultan's victory, it is also mentioned that the Ottomans had a free path to Moldavia, Hungary, Poland and Russia and the "keys" of this region were in their hands. Simplifying, we may assert that, after the fall of Caffa, the fight from the eastern border of Christendom was reduced to the mere defense of Kilia and Akkerman. However, the situation in the region was complicated by the fluctuation of the political-military relations in northern Black Sea region and by the subordination of the Crimean Khanate to the Ottoman Porte.¹⁰⁵ The latter event significantly increased the political and military pressure on Moldavia, thus limiting Stephen the Great's room of manoeuvre.

Beyond these considerations, our work tries to integrate the Ottoman threat into the complexity of the religious and cultural realities of the fifteenth century, underlining specific aspects of the polemic between Christians and Muslims, or between Catholics and Greek-Orthodox, attitudes and expressions of political and religious thought, without claiming to establish a causality between specific aspects of cultural history and political events. In other words, the circulation of a prophecy about the last emperor has an important connection

104 Jan Loś (ed.), *Pamiętniki janczara, czyli kronika turecka Konstantego z Ostrowicy, napisana między r. 1496 a 1501*, (Krakow, 1912), 108 and 163.

105 Halil İnalcık, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432–1481) and His Time", *Speculum*, 35 (1960), 3: 426.



FIGURE 3 *Akkerman overview.*
PHOTO: OLEKSIY MUZALYEV.

with the crusade and the Ottoman threat, but the text should not be treated as the political program of a certain prince. Furthermore, the religious zeal and ecclesiastical rhetoric against the Ottomans are important for their content, but they cannot be seen as indicators of a widely-accepted stance on the Ottomans. Moreover, in some situations, such rhetoric was a simple figure of speech. Thus, it would be very interesting to discover, when the sources allow it, what lay beyond the political discourse and the true goals of the political actors. Such an approach avoids sterile and useless controversies, generated by some historians' obsession for the "historical truth," given the fact that because of the subjective nature of historical sources the researcher deals with a multifaceted historical reality. Naturally, that does not imply ignoring the controversies or asserting superiority of one interpretation over another. Our goal is to offer a different image of the past, as close as possible to the one with which the people from the past viewed their world. The accurate reconstruction of historical events is of utmost significance but we should not ignore the rumors, the false news, the mystifications and generally all sources that distort reality.

Crusading, Information and Propaganda

In this respect, our approach deals with the history of information and the history of communication, two research fields with great potential for reviving political history. History of information analyses the mechanisms of obtaining

information, the costs of an information and its dissemination in a certain area.¹⁰⁶ The history of communication derives from the history of information but it puts more emphasis on how news was exchanged, how a piece of information could be, according to circumstances, a diplomatic tool, a gift, or a weapon. Research on the topic has focused on the impact of news and propaganda on political actions.¹⁰⁷ By “propaganda” we understand the attempt of political actors to impose certain perceptions about an event or political decision.

The two directions of research are tightly connected with the new orientations of political history, the information having an important role in political decision making, and communication representing a fundamental aspect of politics.¹⁰⁸ After the invention of the printing press, “the wars of the pens” experienced an unprecedented evolution, with European monarchs being aware of the importance of legitimating their position in the eyes of their contemporaries by means of pamphlets and flyers. Whether information circulated orally, in writing, or in print, provoking favourable or unfavourable reactions which depended not only on the content, but also on the manner of presentation.

Our book considers first and foremost claims about the Ottomans and the reactions that they provoked. This choice was prompted by the fact that the Ottoman threat and the crusade represented a constant issue for Christian monarchs, either a real threat or a theme of discourse, with numerous references to the Ottoman peril in medieval sources. The correct interpretation of this information is strongly connected to understanding its background: who were the people involved in collecting, disseminating, and using the information about the Turks, which are the paths on which the news about the Ottoman Empire reached destination, what was their price?

The main source for information on the Ottomans was Venice, “the world capital” of the news in medieval Europe. The manner in which the Republic of San Marco managed to create and make functional a network for gathering and disseminating news can help us understand better the problems that the fifteenth century people encountered whilst handling information. Using its economic resources and political network, Venice placed itself amidst the anti-Ottoman fight, but at the same time was suspected of secret agreements with the Ottomans. Thus, the tense Hungarian-Venetian relationship were,

106 *La circulation des nouvelles au Moyen Age*, (Rome, 1994).

107 W. Behringer, “Introduction: Communication in Historiography”, *German History*, xxvi (2006): 325–332.

108 Sophia Menache, *The Vox Dei. Communications in the Middle Ages* (Oxford-New York, 1990); Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice. Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

more than once, enhanced by the launch of mischievous rumors aimed at discrediting the opponent. Pietro Dolfin's chronicle reminds one of "the infamies" spread throughout Europe by King Sigismund of Luxembourg, according to which the Venetians tried to prevent efforts to resolve the Great Schism from the Western Church and, moreover, they helped Ottomans against Christians.¹⁰⁹ Sixty years later, another king of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus launched similar accusations through his emissaries from the Nürnberg Diet (21 December 1479): Venice was guilty of concluding a shameful peace with the sultan to whom it promised to open its ports, to offer safe conduct on dry land and on sea, and to give help against other Christian powers.¹¹⁰

Clearly, the Ottoman Empire was not a passive actor in this war of news, and knew how to manipulate information sent to the worlds. The manner in which the Ottomans shaped information regarding King Jan Olbracht's campaign in Moldavia tells us less about the Moldavian-Polish war from 1497 and more about the image that the Ottomans were trying to create in the West and especially in Venice about the power of their own empire. Paradoxically, for projecting this powerful image, the Turks used elements of the Polish rhetoric, primarily the idea of a crusade launched by Jan Olbracht as purpose for the expedition from 1497. Nevertheless, while the Polish king used the crusade project to disguise his intentions to attack Moldavia, the Ottomans continued throughout 1497 to cast news according to which they were under serious threat. The aim of such a manoeuvre was to uncover Venice's intentions and distract the Venetians from the sultan's preparations for war.

In order to reconstruct such events our book deals with communication and the manipulation of information. This might throw an unadvised reader off track, or it might give the impression that it relativises the crucial importance of some events, distorting the pious images of certain historical figures as pictured in national historiographies against the anti-Ottoman fight. We assure our readers of our intention to grasp, as best possible, the realities from the late Middle Ages, a period of which our understanding changes more and more thanks to recent studies that differ from the romantic knightly spirit attributed to it by historians in the nineteenth century.

109 Ovidiu Cristea, "Siamo Veneziani, poi christiani: Serenissima și problema cruciadei", *Revista Istorică*, XI, (2000), 1–2: 28.

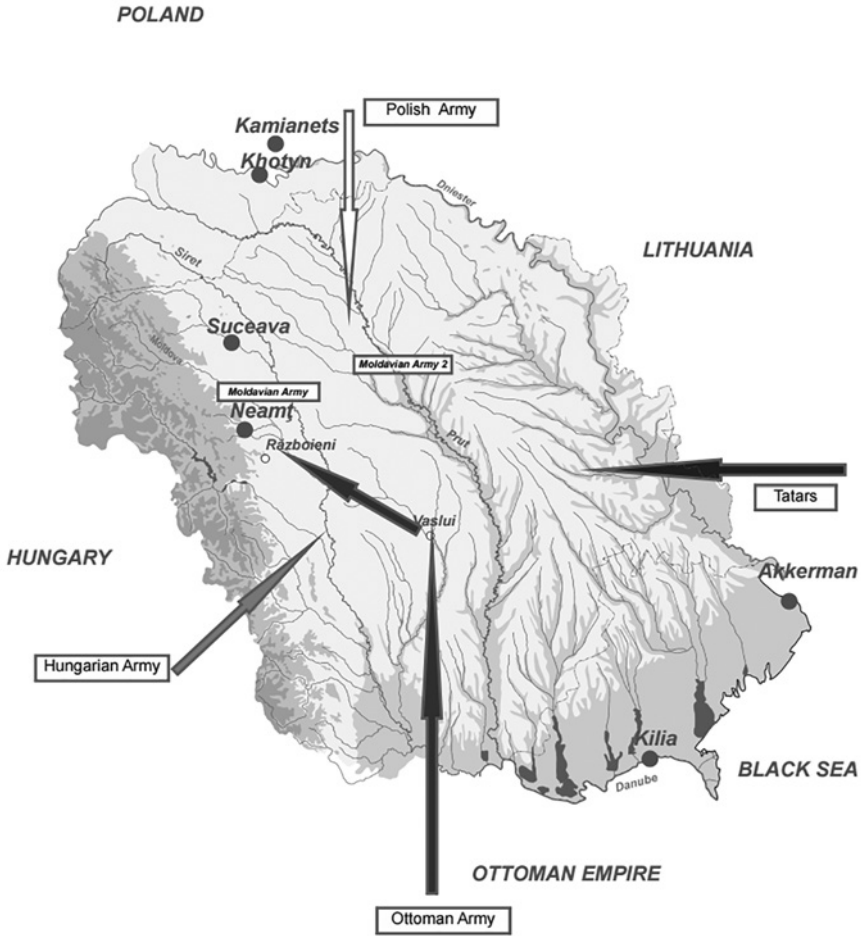
110 Iorga, *Notes et extraits*, v, 55–56.



MAP 1 *Europe during the 15th century* (From *The Public Schools Historical Atlas* edited by C. Colbeck, published by Longmans, Green, and Co. 1905. SOURCE: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/europe_15th_colbeck.jpg).



MAP 2 *The Black Sea area in the 15th century.*



MAP 3 *The Ottoman Campaign in Moldavia of 1476 and Stephen the Great's plan.*

Crusade and Commercial Hegemony in the Black Sea from the Fourth Crusade to the Ottoman Conquest

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Black Sea was a remote area for the crusade armies that passed through Asia Minor on their way to Holy Land. It is no surprise that the year 1204 could be considered as the starting point of the crusade in the Black Sea region, when the armies of the Fourth Crusade conquered Constantinople. The event not only marked the fall of the Byzantine Empire but also the disintegration of the Byzantine hegemony in the Black Sea.¹ Some leaders of the crusade—among them the first two Latin emperors, Baldwin I and Henry I—claimed that the success marked a turning point for the survival of the kingdom of Jerusalem. In their view the “schismatics” were, until 1204, a major obstacle in preventing passage to the Latin Orient and the conquest of Constantinople secured an important base of operation for any expedition which was to be organised against the infidels.² Such claims were never put into practice. On the contrary, from the very beginning, the Latin Empire of Constantinople was a vulnerable political entity which needed a strong military and financial support.

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- 1 Şerban Papacostea, “La Mer Noire du monopole byzantin à la domination des Latins aux Détroits”, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, 27 (1988): 49–71; Sergej Karpov, “The Black Sea region before and after the Fourth Crusade”, *Urbs Capta. The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences*, ed. by Angeliki Laiou (Paris, 2005), 283–292.
 - 2 The idea is underlined in a letter of Baldwin I to pope Innocent III see *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. CCXV, (Paris, 1855), 451–452. The pope seemed to accept Baldwin’s point see *ibidem*, col. 455: “... injungimus et mandamus, ut ad defendendum et retinendum Constantinopolitanum imperium, per cuius subventionis auxilium terra sancta facilius poterit de paganorum minibus liberari.” The documents were analyzed by Şerban Papacostea, *Between the Crusade and the Mongol Empire. The Romanians in the 13th Century* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1998), 33–34 and Filip Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium. The Empire of Constantinople (1204–1228)*, trans. Peter Longbottom (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011), 96–97.

The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences in the Black Sea Area

In fact, with the exception of the reign of Henry I (1206–1216), the first period of the Crusade in the Black Sea (1204–1261) covers the Latin Empire's struggle for survival,³ which came to an end in 1261. An unusual turn of events (i.e. the absence of the Venetian fleet)⁴ made possible the recovery of the ancient capital by the Byzantine army with the support of the Greeks inhabitants.⁵ The unexpected success of Michael VIII Palaiologos triggered new projects aimed to expel the Byzantines from Constantinople and to re-establish the former Latin Empire. One can understand why Venice, the maritime power which developed a strong empire in the Eastern Mediterranean after the Fourth Crusade, was eager to launch a new crusade against the Byzantine Empire and was involved in almost every project against the “schismatics.” Yet, although the Republic was an important naval power, it was unable to attack Constantinople without the support of a strong army. Therefore, from 1261 onwards the Venetian Republic was in search of a western monarch lured by the crown of Constantinople. Eventually, two French princes—Charles of Anjou in 1267–1282⁶ and Charles of Valois in 1306–1310⁷—seemed to be the perfect allies to accomplish the goals of the Venetians. But, despite the

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- 3 It is interesting to notice that several topics employed by the Western chroniclers to describe the fight against the infidels in the Holy Land were used by the history of Henri de Valenciennes to describe the clash between the Latin Empire and the Bulgarian kingdom during the fights against the Bulgarian Kingdom see Ovidiu Cristea, “L'épilogue de la quatrième croisade vu par Henri de Valenciennes”, *Archaeus*, 6 (2002), 1–2: 157–166. More recently for the chroniclers' perspective on Latin Empire's enemies see Florin Curta, “Imaginea vlahilor la cronicarii cruciadei a iv-a. Până unde răzbate ecoul discuțiilor intelectuale de la Constantinopol?”, *Arheologia Moldovei*, 38 (2015): 25–68.
 - 4 According to some Venetian chronicles the Venetian fleet was sent to conquer the little island of Daphnousia see Ovidiu Cristea, “La reconquête byzantine de Constantinople et l'action vénitienne à Daphnousia”, *Il Mar Nero*, 4 (1999–2000): 137–142.
 - 5 Deno John Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West 1258–1282. A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), 92–97; Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice. A study in diplomatic and cultural relations*, (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 177–178; Șerban Marin, “Venice and the Loss of Constantinople. The Representation of the Events of 1261 in Venetian Chronicles”, *Il Mar Nero. Annali di archeologia e storia*, 5 (2001/2003): 209–239.
 - 6 For a detailed account of these negotiations see Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus*, 189–244 and 305–334; Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 189–210.
 - 7 Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 224–226; Angeliki E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins. The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II 1282–1328*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 200–220 and 233–242.

intensive preparations and negotiations, the crusading projects that aimed to re-establish the Latin control in Constantinople were never put into practice. The political and military context of such a venture was far too complicated to open the way for plans and various developments occurred in several areas of the Mediterranean Sea, during the second half of the thirteenth century, which put an end to any crusade expedition against the Byzantine Empire.

A huge impact on the political and cultural evolution of the Black Sea region in the thirteenth-fourteenth century resulted from the signing of the Treaty of Nymphaion in March 1261 between emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos and Genoa, which took place only months before the fall of the Latin Empire. The emperor, who was in search of a strong maritime ally aimed to counterbalance the Venetian fleet, granted to the Ligurian Republic extensive privileges in the Pontic area. For the first time a Byzantine emperor opened the Black Sea to the foreign traders, thus starting the process for the transformation of the Black Sea as a sort of Genoese “inner lake.”⁸ After 1261 the Genoese not only replaced their Venetian arch-rivals in Constantinople, but also managed to create a network of settlements along all the shores of the Black Sea: Pontarachia, Sinope, Trebizond (on the south), Caffa and Soldaia (in Crimea), Vicina and Licostomo (on the Lower Danube) and Moncastro (at the mouth of Dniestr). All these key points were not just trade centres, but also naval bases from which trade routes could be controlled. To be sure, such a process was neither linear nor without setbacks. For instance, in 1264, the Genoese were expelled from Constantinople to Herakleia in Thrace as a result of a plot led by the Genoese podesta, Guglielmo Guercio, who aimed to offer the city of Constantinople to Manfred, the illegitimate son of Frederic II of Hohenstauffen;⁹ in 1308, Caffa, the main Genoese trading centre, was destroyed by the Khan Toqta and the Ligurian Republic was forced to abandon the place until the reign of Khan Ozbek;¹⁰ last, but not least, the struggle between the Genoese Guelf and the

8 Michel Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII^e–début du XV^e siècle)*, 2 vol., (Rome, 1978); Şerban Papacostea, “Byzance et les Détroits sous les premiers Paléologues”, *Il Mar Nero*, 4 (1999–2000), 151–160; Steven A. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese 958–1528*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 150–151.

9 Şerban Papacostea, “La première crise des rapports byzantino-génois après Nymphaion. Le complot de Guglielmo Guercio (1264)”, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 27(1986): 339–350; Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 1, 49.

10 The precise moment when Ozbek granted a new privilege for the Genoese is uncertain; it may be 1316, but according to Virgil Ciociltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea Trade in the 13th and 14th centuries*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), 178, note 141 “it is more likely to have already been made in 1313.” For the siege of Caffa by Toqta’s troops see *ibid.* 164. For the year 1313 as a turning point in Genoese-Tatar relations see Şerban Papacostea, “Les Génois et la

Ghibelline factions put all the positions held by the Ligurian Republic in the Pontic area in jeopardy. After the Guelf faction seized power in Genoa, the colonies of the Black Sea remained loyal to Ghibellines families. Such a “schism” provoked the reaction of the new Genoese leaders who in 1323 sent a fleet to the Black Sea that aimed to subdue the rebels.¹¹

Despite all these issues, at the end of the thirteenth century, Genoa had already established a strong hegemony in the Pontic area. Their network enabled the Genoese to control trade in the entire region and, moreover, to compel merchants from other areas to accept their terms. Foreign merchants were forced to load their goods only onto Genoese ships¹² and to trade only in Genoese establishments and to avoid rival ports—such as Tana in the Sea of Azov.¹³ The final aim of such measures was to limit or even to forbid access to the Black Sea for other merchants, a sort of revival of ancient Byzantine policy during the Comnenoi dynasty.

Along with the Treaty of Nymphaion and the beginning of Genoese hegemony in the Black Sea, another key factor in the history of the region was the Mongol invasion and the subsequent creation of the Golden Horde.¹⁴ The emergence of the new power, which controlled the Northern shores of the Black Sea and a large adjacent area, had a huge impact on the reconfiguration of international trade routes between Europe and Asia. The “symbiosis” between *pax mongolica* and the initiative of Genoese merchants opened the way for the transformation of the Black Sea into a *plaque tournante du commerce international*,¹⁵ a situation which lasted until the fall of Caffa (1475) and Kilia and Akkerman (1484).

Horde d'Or: le tournant de 1313”, *Chemins d'outre mer. Études d'histoire sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, (Paris: Publications de Sorbonne, 2004), 651–659.

- 11 For this episode and the subsequent clash between the Genoese fleet and Gazi Celebi of Sinope see Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Gazi Çelebi of Sinope”, *Oriente e Occidente tra Medioevo ed età moderna. Studi in onore di Geo Pitarino*, ed. Laura Baletto, II, (Genoa, 1997), 1271–1275 especially 1274.
- 12 Angeliki E. Laiou, “Monopoly and Privilege: the Byzantine reaction to the Genoese presence in the Black Sea”, *Oriente e Occidente tra Medioevo ed età moderna. Studi in onore di Geo Pitarino*, ed. by Laura Baletto, II, (Genova, 1997), 675–686.
- 13 Şerban Papacostea, “Quod non iretur ad Tanam: un aspect fundamental de la politique génoise dans la Mer Noire au XIV^e siècle”, *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 17 (1979): 201–217.
- 14 Virgil Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea*, *passim*.
- 15 The phrase belong to Gh. I. Brătianu, “La Mer Noire, plaque tournante du trafic international à la fin du Moyen Age”, *Revue Historique du Sud Est Européen* 21(1944), 36–69; more recently Şerban Papacostea, *La Mer Noire Carrefour des grandes routes internationales*

The Mongol invasion opened a new front for crusading in Eastern Europe. However, until mid 14th century Christendom adopted a defensive stance due to the Tatars' military superiority. For several decades after 1241, crusading policy in the area was limited only to defensive actions aimed to prevent any other attack from the Tatar forces. Thus, the council of Lyon (1245) exhorted the Christian princes to undertake all the necessary measures against the forthcoming invasion and especially, to build the necessary fortifications aimed to secure the routes of access to Christian kingdoms.¹⁶

However, there were some projects for an offensive action. In 1254, King Bela IV of Hungary expressed in a letter to Pope Innocent IV, his intention to fight against the pagans and the schismatics with the help of the Hospitaller knights established at the borders of his realm, and to extend the Catholic faith "all along the Danube up to the Constantinopolitanian Sea."¹⁷ Such words are more probably only a figure of speech aimed to underline the status of Hungary as an outpost of Christianity and the king's determination to secure two main objectives of the crusading movement: the Latin Empire and the Holy Land. The context was far less favourable for such an offensive; indeed, the formidable might of the khan of Sarai postponed any Christian offensive in the region until the mid-fourteenth century. Only after the death of Khan Ozbek was the Golden Horde's hegemony shattered by a simultaneous offensive led by Hungary and Poland and by the clash with the Genoese and Venetian merchants from Caffa and Tana.¹⁸ Until that period Tatar hegemony and the *pax mongolica* established by the khans in the northern regions of the Black Sea created favourable conditions for trade and the Genoese merchants were able to profit.

1204–1453 (Bucharest, 2006); Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea*, 150–240; Nicola Di Cosmo, "Mongols and Merchants on the Black Sea frontier in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: convergences and conflicts", *Turco-Mongol Nomads and Sedentary Societies*, eds. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran. (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005), 391–424.

16 *Les Conciles oecumeniques. Les Décrets* 11-1. *Nicée I à Latran V*, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1994), 624: "Ideoque sacro suadente concilio, universos vos monemus, rogamus et hortamur, attente mandantes, quatenus viam et aditus unde in terram nostram gens ipsa posset ingredi solertissime perscrutantes, illos fossatis et muris seu aliis aedificiis aut artificiis, prout expedire videritis, taliter praemunire curetis, quod eiusdem gentis ad ingressus patere de facili nequeat".

17 Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, 1/1, (Bucharest, 1887), 261, "... quod propagines Catholice fidei sicut pretenditur Danubius usque ad mare Constantinopolitanum (...) et sic Romanie imperio et eciam terre sancte poterunt impendere subsidia oportuna".

18 Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea*, 199–219.

The Genoese Hegemony in the Black Sea, the Venetian Reaction and the Crusade

The Genoese presence in the Black Sea was also strengthened by several setbacks for their Venetian rivals. Along with the impossibility of launching, after 1261, a crusade against the Byzantine Empire, Venice was expelled from the Holy Land as a result of the Mamluk conquest of the last Christian strongholds in the Holy Land (Acre fell in 1291). Even worse, one year before, in 1290, the Genoese were able to obtain a privilege from the Mamluk sultan, a treaty which offered to the Ligurian merchants' access to Alexandria and other Egyptian trading centres.¹⁹ Such diplomatic success inflicted a huge blow to their rivals who were forced to submit to the embargo established by the papacy against the sultan of Egypt after 1291.

All these developments compelled Venice to reassess its policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. On one hand, Venice tried to counter-balance Genoese supremacy in the Black Sea by a war—the so-called “war of Curzola”—which started in 1293 and lasted until 1299;²⁰ on the other hand the Republic of Saint Mark reconsidered the possibility of a crusade against Byzantium and began, after 1310, a politics of accommodation with the *basileus*. Furthermore, the lack of success in the war of Curzola required the Venetians to use diplomatic tools in order to balance the Genoese influence in the Black Sea. As a result, in 1319 Venice received from the emperor of Trebizond commercial privileges and the right to set up a quarter in the capital of the Grand Comnenoi. It represented the first weakening of Genoese hegemony in the Black Sea, a “bridgehead” which would be built upon in the following years.²¹ In 1324 a treaty signed with Byzantium dispelled all tensions between the former enemies and, as a result, Venice secured its position in Constantinople.²² The next step was achieved in 1332, when the Venetians obtained a commercial privilege from Ozbek, the

19 Virgil Ciocîltan, “Genoa’s Challenge to Egypt: 1287–1290”, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, 32 (1993), 3–4: 283–307; Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 180–181.

20 G. I. Brătianu, “Les origines de la guerre de Curzola (1294–1299) entre Gênes et Venise”, *Mélanges d’Histoire générale*, 1, ed. C. Marinescu (Cluj, 1927): 87–100; Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 1, 59–61; Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 217–221; Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese*, 182–184; M. E. Martin, “The Venetians in the Black Sea: a general survey”, in *The Eastern Mediterranean Frontier of Latin Christendom*, ed. by Jace Stuckey, (Ashgate Variorum, 2014), 65.

21 Serghei P. Karpov, *L’Impero di Trebisonda: Venezia, Genova e Roma, 1204–1461. Rapporti politici, diplomatici e commerciali*, (Rome, 1986), 77–79; Martin, “The Venetians in the Black Sea”, 69.

22 Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 247–248.

khan of the Golden Horde which also granted them the right to build their own settlement at Tana, an important trading centre at the mouth of the Don River. As Virgil Ciocîltan emphasised, the privilege “gave the Serenissima’s merchants access to a market which, by its geographical nature, was a perfect gathering place for wares from the steppe and the Northern Eurasian forests, from Turkestan and the Far East.”²³ It was a real triumph for Venice, as the position secured at Tana was in direct competition with Caffa, the so-called capital of the Genoese trade in the Black Sea.²⁴ The last in this series of privileges was the agreement of 1347 with the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Alexander, a treaty reconfirmed in 1352. The document granted the Venetians a privileged position on the western Black Sea shores and in all the Bulgarian territories regions in which the Genoese were never in a very strong position.²⁵

This reconsideration of Venetian policy in the Black Sea provoked a significant adjustment of the crusading policy. The new era which started around 1310 was dominated by a “fragmentation” of the crusading ideal. The failure of all previous attempts to support the Holy Land or to recover Constantinople compelled the crusading strategists to find new ways to fight against the infidels. Moreover, the multiplication of the enemies in the Black Sea and the Aegean area (the Golden Horde, the Seljuk emirates of Mentеше and Aydin, and from mid-fourteenth century onwards the Ottoman Turks) required a more pragmatic approach and the substitution of a “general crusade” (*passagium generale*), theoretically launched to recover the Holy Sepulchre, with a small-scale crusade (*passagium particulare*) aimed to confront and to repel the enemy of the Cross in a specific region. In parallel with its re-orientation of the policy in the Black Sea, Venice launched a sustained offensive on other Mediterranean fronts. In the Aegean, the Republic’s positions were strengthened as a result of the naval actions directed against the Turkish threat. The Venetians persuaded Pope Clement VI to support a crusading project targeting not the Holy Land or Mamluk Egypt but rather the Turkish emirates (Aydin, Mentеше, Qarasi), which in the previous years inflicted several blows to the Latin strongholds in the Aegean and the Balkans. Such small-scale crusading

23 Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea*, 196.

24 Papacostea, “Quod non iretur ad Tanam”, 202–205; Ciocîltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea*, 196–198; Martin, “The Venetians in the Black Sea”, 70–71.

25 Vasil Gjuzelev, “I rapport bulgaro-genovesi nei secoli XIII–XIV”, *Genova e la Bulgaria nel Medioevo*, (Genoa, 1984), 106; Vasil Gjuzelev, “Nuovi documenti sull’attivit  commerciale dei genovesi nelle terre bulgare nel secolo XIV”, *Genova e la Bulgaria nel Medioevo* (Genoa, 1984), 397–426; Michel Balard, “Les g nois et les regions bulgares au XIV^e si cle”, *Byzantinobulgarica*, 7 (1981): 87–97.

activity (*passagium particulare*), was—from a Venetian perspective—essential for any project aimed to liberate the Holy Sepulchre. As a result of the Venetian initiative and with papal support a naval league was formed which gathered the Republic of Saint Mark, the Hospitallers of Rhodes, the Kingdom of Cyprus and the Byzantine Empire.²⁶ The victory of Adramyttion (1334) and the conquest of the port of Smyrna (1344) were minor successes; nonetheless, for several reasons, they had important consequences on Venetian policy. The naval leagues strengthened the relation with the Byzantines and underlined the importance of keeping a crusader fleet in the Levant over a longer period of time, a strategic idea emphasised by Marino Sanudo Torsello.²⁷ Although Sanudo's idea that a Christian fleet should have established a blockade against Egypt was never put into practice, Venice used a similar approach to put an end to the Turkish threat in the Aegean. Last but not least, the naval leagues led by Venice showed the strategic role of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus Straits in undertaking operations in the Aegean Sea and the imperative to preserve a good relationship with the Byzantine Empire.

The successes of the “crusades” of 1334 and 1344 were based upon the good relationship with Pope Clement VI. Owing to this excellent collaboration, the Venetians requested and received papal permission to open the commercial route to Alexandria. Until then, this destination had been theoretically forbidden to Christian merchants after the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt's conquest of the Holy Land. Opening the Alexandria route for ships bearing the flag of St. Mark was rightly seen at the time as a huge diplomatic triumph.²⁸ No less rightly, the Genoese viewed it as a serious threat to their supremacy; the Venetians had made their way into the Black Sea during the first half of the fourteenth century, had strengthened their positions in the Aegean, and had opened a new commercial trade route previously out of reach, at least theoretically, for Western merchants. Moreover, an unexpected episode of collaboration between the two Italian Republics accelerated the tensions between them

26 Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade. Venetian Crete and the Emirates of Menteshe and Aydin (1300–1415)*, (Venice, 1983), 21–40.

27 Angeliki E. Laiou, “Marino Sanudo Torsello, Byzantium and the Turks: the anti-Turkish league of 1332–1334,” *Speculum* 45 (1970): 374–392; Franco Cardini, “I costi della crociata. L'appeto economico del progetto di Marin Sanudo il Vecchio”, Id. *Studi sulla storia e sull'idea di crociata*, (Rome: Jouvence, 1993), 377–411; Cristopher J. Tyerman, “Marino Sanudo Torsello and the Lost Crusade: lobbying in the Fourteenth Century”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 32 (1982), 57–73.

28 Frederic C. Lane, “The Venetian Galleys to Alexandria 1344”, *Studies in Venetian Social and Economic History*, eds. F. C. Lane, B. G. Kohl and R. C. Mueller, (London: Variorum Reprints), 431–440.

and eventually provoked the outbreak of a new war. In September 1343, a scuffle between a Tatar subject and a Venetian merchant gave the Khan Janibek a good reason to expel all the Western merchants from Tana and then from all his territories. As a result, both Genoese and Venetians reacted and the war that followed was seen as a sort of “holy war” against a deceitful Saracen (*perfidus Saracenus*). The incident which ignited the war of the Golden Horde was seen as a “divine miracle” and the prospect to lose Caffa and other trade settlements as harmful for all Christendom.²⁹ Such a rhetoric was approved by Pope Clement VI who asked in a similar language, on 24 January 1346, the newly appointed captain general of the crusade against the Turks, Humbert of Viennois, to assist the Genoese and the Venetians in their struggle against Khan Janibek.³⁰

As the papal instructions pointed out, the khan's main target was Caffa, besieged by the Tatar troops from 1343 until 1346. During this period the Genoese and the Venetians were forced to find a way to collaborate and to compel the khan to abandon the war, to re-open trade and to confirm ancient privileges. Both Republics agreed that the best tool to achieve their goal was to impose a trade boycott (*devetum*) against the Golden Horde's territories. But their views differed considerably with respect to the methods used to implement such embargo. For Venice the interdiction should have encompassed all the Northern Black Sea shores, Caffa included. For Genoa such a claim was unacceptable because was more harmful for Genoese merchants than the khan's subjects. In their views the *devetum* should have concerned only the territories under the khan's direct control. In the end the Genoese convinced the Venetians to accept their point of view. The concluded treaty stipulated that the embargo excluded Caffa and concerned only the Golden Horde's territories.³¹ After long negotiations the resulting agreement was a short-lived one. Both camps made some concessions, to the dissatisfaction of both Republics. The burden of war encumbered Genoa which was forced to defend the city of Caffa for a long period. Moreover, the Genoese were forced to take actions against a khan's attempt to build a fleet aimed to fight against the Italians at sea.³²

29 The document was published by Raimondo Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie da Caffa”, *Studi in onore di Amintore Fanfani*, III, (Milano: Giuffrè, 1962), 282.

30 Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, I, *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth centuries*, (Philadelphia, 1976), 202: the pope argued that the “Saracens, Tatars and other infidels, enemies of the cross and the name Christian, in a large and hostile gathering at Caffa.... have laid siege to the city by land on all sides”. The phrase followed the same ideas as the Venetian document quoted above.

31 For the episode of 1343 and the Genoese-Venetian negotiations Balard, *Romanie*, I, 154; Ciociltan, *The Mongols and the Black Sea*, 207–209.

32 Morozzo della Rocca, “Notizie da Caffa”, 282.

The Venetians had their own problems at that moment in the Aegean and were astonished to notice that the Genoese violated the *devetum* against the Golden Horde.³³ No wonder that once the war with Janibek was concluded the former allies re-opened their commercial disputes. The bone of contention was, once again, the settlement of Tana. The Genoese tried to preserve the clause which banned the access of their rivals at the mouth of Don River, while the Venetians considered such interdiction absurd once the war with the Tatars ended. As all the negotiations failed the Genoese took an exceptional step: they tried to forbid Venetian access to Tana and even to the entire Black Sea area. The Byzantine chronicle of Nikephoros Gregoras mentions that the Genoese started to enforce the claim by attacking and capturing all ships not complying with the interdiction and the Venetian chronicles of Andrea Navagero, Antonio Morosini and Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo share the same perspective.³⁴ Venetian protests against the blockade imposed by Genoa in the Pontic area had no impact as long as the Genoese pretended that the Black Sea was their own territory. These arguments were also reflected in other Venetian chronicles, each one adding a personal touch to the events. All chronicles consider the Genoese claim absurd and point out that Venice was concerned to keep trade flowing as freely as possible provided this could be done without running undue risks. The keywords seem to be “safety” and “caution,” with negotiation always preferred to battle. But in the end Venice was forced to declare war as long as its liberty of navigation in the Black Sea was questioned.³⁵

33 Ibid., 278–279; according to the Venetians view the silk trade between Caffa and merchants of Solkhat was a clear proof that the Genoese eluded the treaty “... bene videmus quod aliquis Iudei, Armini et alia gens qui de Sorgati veniunt in Gaffa dicunt quod in Sorgati sit una magna quantitas sirici et, si ita esset quod tanta quantitas seda quanta ipsi dicunt esse in Sorgati, nobis videretur signum quod esset ita verum quod caminum esset apertum.”

34 Nikephor Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, ed. L. Schoppen, II, (Bonn, 1830), 877 see the comment in Șerban Papacostea, “Quod non iretur ad Tanam”; Andrea Navagero, *Historia Veneta italic sermone scripta ab origine Urbis usque ad annum MCDXCVIII*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XXIII, ed. L. A. Muratori, (Milano, 1753), 1034; *The Morosini Codex*, I. *To the death of Andrea Dandolo (1354)*, eds. Michele Pietro Ghezzi, John R. Melville-Jones and Andrea Rizzi (Padova, 1999), p. 118; Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo, *Istorii venețiene*. III. *De la alegerea dogelui Andrea Dandolo la moartea dogelui Giovanni Delfino*, ed. Șerban Marin, (Bucharest, 2010), 35.

35 As an anonymous Venetian chronicle pointed out “non doveva essere lecito a nessuno mettere in dubbio la potesta e arbitrio veneziano sui commerce orientali” Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, mss. It. VII (=559), f. 6 *recto*.

The war lasted no less than five years. Its outbreak occurred in a very unfavourable context marked by the economic crisis and the Black Death.³⁶ Despite some major naval clashes between the two Italian Republics the outcome of the war did not significantly change the balance of forces in the Mediterranean. Only in the Black Sea Genoa preserved and consolidated its exceptional status. At the end of the conflict, in 1355, Venetian ships were forbidden access to Tana for three years, but were allowed to navigate and to trade in other Black Sea settlements. Moreover, the Genoese had managed to extend their domination over the northern and north-western shores of the Black Sea, and thus to develop considerably the area under their direct control. The Ligurian merchants also took up quarters at Licostomo, a strategic trading centre at the mouths of the Danube, giving access to the routes linking Central Europe to the Black Sea.³⁷ Last, but not least, the conflict marked the beginnings of the Genoese-Ottoman alliance, a long-lasting conjugation of forces in the international relations of the Later Middle Ages. This collusion together with the rise of the Kingdom of Hungary during the Angevin dynasty influenced the long term history of the Black Sea. In a few decades the fragile balance of power established at the end of the Genoese-Venetian war of 1350–1355 was considerably altered. For the Venetian interests far more dangerous than the Genoese-Ottoman alliance established before the battle of Bosphorus³⁸ seems to have been the agreement between King Louis I of Hungary and the Ligurian Republic. Both powers were arch-rivals of the Venetian Republic, Genoa in the Mediterranean as a whole and Hungary in the Adriatic, and both aimed to isolate, to weaken and eventually to eliminate her as a political and commercial power. At the end of the war of 1350–1355 the Republic of Saint Mark already suffered a double blow: the Genoese extended their domination over the entire northern shore of the Black Sea, while Louis I conquered Dalmatia, a bone of contention between Venice and Hungary. In parallel with the war between the Tartar and the Italian merchants in 1346–1347, the Golden Horde faced in its western territories the pressure of the Hungarian and Polish kingdoms. Due to the waning of Tartar domination on the Lower Danube, Louis I of Hungary imposed his suzerainty

36 For the negative effects of the plague see Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Merchants in crisis. Genoese and Venetian men of affairs and the fourteenth century depression*, (New-Haven-London, 1976); cf. Serghei P. Karpov, "Black Sea and the crisis of mid 14th century: an underestimated turning point", *Thesaurismata*, 27 (1997): 65–77.

37 Şerban Papacostea, "De Vicina à Kilia. Byzantins et Génois aux bouches du Danube au XIV^e siècle", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 16 (1978): 65–79.

38 Michel Balard, "A propos de la bataille du Bosphore. L'expédition génoise de Paganino Doria à Constantinople (1351–1352)", *Travaux et Mémoires*, 4 (1970): 431–469.

on the emergent principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia and established a commercial route between the mouth of the Danube and the trading centres of southern Transylvania (Braşov/Kronstadt and Sibiu/Hermannstadt). After the Genoese established their domination at Licostomo during the Venetian-Genoese war of 1350–1355, prospects were created for a commercial trade route between Crimea and Buda *via* Kilia and southern Transylvania.³⁹

Such developments seemed to favor the project for the isolation of Venice, but in fact the goal was not easy to achieve. Despite the exhaustion caused by the war and some internal upheaval (the conspiracy of Doge Marino Faliero), Venice was still a strong maritime and commercial power. Furthermore, relations between its two main enemies—Genoa and Hungary—had several obscure issues to consider (for instance, one may ask why the Genoese did not use the so-called Wallachian trade route linking Kilia/Licostomo to Buda *via* Transylvania) and they were influenced by different political objectives. For Louis I of Anjou the fight against the Republic of Saint Mark was only an episode of a wider policy aimed to achieve the king's domination over all Central Europe. For Genoa, in return, the clash with Venice was the main political target as both Republics struggled for hegemony in the Mediterranean.

It is interesting to note that for the Venetian chroniclers the Genoese-Hungarian alliance was seen in similar terms with the treaty between Genoa and Byzantium concluded almost a century before at Nymphaion. For the Venetian historians the treaty of Nymphaion was concluded “against God and against all justice” (*contra Deum et omnia jura*)⁴⁰ and had its origins in the Genoese envy of Venice's rich trade and wealth.⁴¹ This seemed to be the reason that pushed the Genoese into an alliance with the schismatic Byzantine Emperor described as the “enemy of the Holy Roman Church.”⁴²

The language used by the Venetian chroniclers speculates, in a subtle way, that both the different policy of the two Italian republics towards the crusade and the alliance between the two “pillars of Christendom” at that moment—France and Venice—were being played against the collusion between traitors and schismatics (the Genoese and the Greeks). In the same Venetian chron-

39 Şerban Papacostea, “Un tournant de la politique génoise en Mer Noire au XIV^e siècle: l'ouverture des routes continentales en direction de l'Europe Centrale”, *Oriente e Occidente tra Medioevo ed età moderna. Studi in onore di Geo Pîstarino*, ed. Laura Baletto, II, (Genoa, 1997), 939–947.

40 The phrase belong to Marino Sanudo Torsello see Robert Lee Wolff, *Studies in the Latin Empire of Constantinople*, (London, 1976), 152.

41 Caroldo, *Istorie veneziene*, II, 31.

42 Ibid.

icles, a similar language can be identified when they describe the Genoese-Hungarian alliance, although the King of Hungary was a Catholic, and not a Greek-Orthodox emperor such as Michael Palaiologus.

Therefore, deliberately ignoring the rivalry for Dalmatia which poisoned the Hungarian-Venetian relations since the twelfth century, the chronicler Raphayno de Caresini terms as unjustified and inexplicable the anti-Venetian actions of Louis I. In order to underscore Louis' "irrational" policy, Caresini mentions that Louis seemed to be a descendent of Attila, the Hun, *flagellum Dei* and not of the line of France's most Christian kings. The chronicler also emphasises the great services rendered by Venice to Christendom in defending the seas from infidels and pirates.⁴³ For Caresini, through his alliance with Genoa, the king of Hungary joined a people hated by God and all Christendom, a people that always lived by looting.⁴⁴ In turn, a version of Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo's chronicle states that Louis' policy was the result of his ambition to conquer the entire Italian Peninsula, Venice being considered a major obstacle in the achievement of such goal.⁴⁵ Almost each Venetian historian constructed his narrative around several ideas presented in the political discourse of the Republic. One of the topoi was the strong connection between the Republic, the Christian faith, and the crusade. The purpose of such claims was to legitimate the Republic's action and to blame its rivals and associate them with the enemies of the Cross. One can find such statements in almost every Venetian chronicle, with variations owing to the divergent narratives of the Venetian aristocratic families.⁴⁶

The negative pictures outlined by the Venetian chronicles against the Republic's enemies mirrors the concern provoked by the Genoese-Hungarian

43 Raphaynus de Caresinis, "Chronica aa. 1343–1388", *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, xii/pars II, ed. Ester Pastorello (Bologna, 1923), 23: "Mirum, quod tantum regem, qui non ab Atyla flagello Dei, sed a christianissimis Francorum regibus traxit originem, immoderatus adeo amor abduxerit, ut per epistolas et nuncios invitet universas nationes ad praedam contra Venetos, qui, pro fide catholica, pro tuitione ac libertate universorum contra Turcos et piratas, proprijs sumptibus, mare custodiunt".

44 Ibid. 30.

45 Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Mss. It. VII, 128b (=7443), f. 887: "la sua insatiabile ambizione di soggiogare tutta Italia, parendoli che lo Stato di Venetia gli fosse solo impedimento a tale suo desiderio". The author added that Louis, was unable to crush Venice "senza le maritime forze però aspettavano che Genovesi all'ora potentissimi nel mae havessero caggione d'unirsi con loro contro Venetiani".

46 See Antonio Carile, "Aspetti della cronachistica veneziana nei secoli XIIIo–XIVo", *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*, ed. by Agostino Pertusi, (Olschki: Florence, 1970), p. 75–120 especially 97–106.

alliance and by the aggressive policy pursued by king Louis I. Already during the Venetian-Genoese war of 1350–1355, several events concurred to undermine the Venetians' interests. In 1352, Genoa requested the support of King Louis in their negotiations with the emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg. In their plea, the Genoese asked the emperor to prohibit all contact of German merchants with Venice. The negotiations were successful and the emperor proclaimed an embargo, which was in place until 1358.⁴⁷

Venice tried to prevent the alliance between Hungary and Genoa by diplomatic means, but their efforts were bitterly disappointing. According to the chronicle of Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo the ambassadors received only good words and no concrete solution. Even worse, there were rumors which suggested that Louis was prepared to conquer Zadar (Zara) a prospect which compelled the Republic of Saint Mark to strengthen its strongholds in Dalmatia.⁴⁸

The end of the war in the Black Sea between the two Italian Republics did not remove the danger represented by the Genoese-Hungarian alliance. On the contrary, the threat became even more serious once the Hungarian army invaded Dalmatia. The territory was claimed by Louis I several times between 1345–1348 and once again in 1353 when a Hungarian embassy demanded the restitution of the aforementioned territory.⁴⁹ As both camps failed to find a diplomatic solution, Louis the Great took initiative and, without any warning, launched an attack against Friuli and Dalmatia. The king's troops besieged Treviso while another part of his army conquered Zadar, Sebenik, Split, Trau

47 Sime Ljubić (ed.), *Listine. O odnosajih između južnoga slaventsva i mletacke republike*, IV, (Zagreb, 1874), 8: on 4 april 1359 Charles IV of Luxembourg announced the town of Augsburg “cum pro amore illustrissimi principis domini Ludovici regis Hungariae fratris nostri dilecti inimitias gessimus contrariando civitati Venetiarum civibusque eiusdem civitatis et cum se mutuo nunc per concordiam composuerint, hinc est per nos predictam civitatem et cives Venetiarum cum eorum bonis gratiose resumpsimus in nostre tutelae defensionem cesariam”. Comments of the text in: Șerban Papacostea, “De la guerre du Bosphore à la guerre de Tenedos: rivalités commerciales et alignements politiques dans le Sud-Est de l’Europe dans la seconde moitié du XIV^e siècle”, *Coloniser au Moyen Age*, eds. Michel Balard, Alain Ducellier, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1995), 4; see also Gyorgy Szekely, “Les facteurs économiques et politiques dans les rapports de la Hongrie et de Venise à l’époque de Sigismond”, *Venezia e Ungheria nel Rinascimento*, ed. V. Branca, (Firenze, 1973), 37–38.

48 Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo, *Istoria venetiana*. III: 45, 60, 66.

49 Ibid. 66: “Il Re d’Ungheria manda un suo Ambasciatore in Venetia, il quale giunse alli XIJ Genaro. La summa della proposta sua fu dimandar la restitutione delle terre della Dalmatia.” For details concerning Louis I policy towards Croatia and Dalmatia see Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary 895–1526*, transl. by Tamás Pálosfalvi, (London-New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 161–162.

and Nona. Along with the military successes Louis the Great tried to surround Venice by a network of alliances. The king secured a treaty with the lord of Padua, Francesco of Carrara, and also with the patriarch of Aquileia and with the duke of Austria. He also intended to gain the Genoese support with the help of the duke of Milan, the lord of the city at that time. Although the Genoese collaboration could not be achieved in 1356–1358 the project outlined by Louis the Great during this conflict would be resumed later during the so-called “War of Chioggia” (1377–1381).

Unable to resist, Venice initiated negotiations and asked also for papal mediation. The diplomatic discussions were carried out between 11 November 1356 and the beginning of April 1357 and were supervised by the legate Pierre de Thomas.⁵⁰ The legate’s mission was almost impossible as the two camps’ perspectives were incompatible. Venice had no intention to yield Zadar to the Hungarian king, while Louis asked for a compensation of 100,000 florins. Consequently, on 9 April 1357, the war broke out again and ended with a complete Hungarian victory. As a result, the peace of Zadar (18 February 1358) sanctioned the loss of Dalmatia by the Venetians. Louis’ success through his victories against Golden Horde in 1345 and the following years⁵¹ brought forth the establishment of a commercial link between the Black Sea and the Adriatic Sea by way of Transylvanian towns of Braşov/Kronstadt and Sibiu/Hermannstadt. In order to boost the trade on these new established routes, the king granted important privileges to the towns of Bratislava (1361), Sibiu (1367, 1370), Braşov and, by the end of 1370, to all merchants from the kingdom of Hungary.⁵² According to Zsigmond Pál Pach the king aimed to transform Zadar in a sort of “anti-Venice,” an ambitious plan but difficult to put into practice. Despite all of the privileges granted to his own subjects, the king was unable to direct the necessary flow of eastern commodities⁵³ toward the Dalmatian town, because his interests were hardly compatible with those of Transylvanian merchants who preferred to trade in Central Europe and not the towns of Dalmatia.⁵⁴

50 Frederic J. Boehlke, *Pierre de Thomas. Scholar, Diplomat and Crusader*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), 104–128.

51 Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 165–166; Şerban Papacostea, *Geneza statului în Evul Mediu românesc*, (Cluj-Napoca, 1988), 236–239.

52 Papacostea, “De la guerre du Bosphore”, 343.

53 Zsigmond Pál Pach, “La politica commerciale di Luigi d’Angio e il traffico delle mercanzie maritime dopo la pace di Zara”, *Rapporti veneto-ungheresi all’epoca del Rinascimento*, ed. Tibor Klaniczay (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975), 105–119; Zsigmond Pál Pach, “Le commerce du Levant et la Hongrie au Moyen Age”, *Annales E. S. C.* 31 (1976), 6: 1176–1194.

54 Pach, “La politica commerciale”, 117.

The anti-Venetian policy of Louis the Great went far beyond commercial interests. As Pál Engel noticed “the friendship established with Padua dragged the king into two further wars with Venice.”⁵⁵ As mentioned before, Louis tried to gather all the enemies of Venice in the Italian Peninsula with the goal of isolating the Republic and compelling it to submit to his will. Although there are still a number of ambiguities, the general outlines of Louis’ plan can be identified. Louis intended to use the Dalmatian ports as a base of maritime operations in the Adriatic and to build a war fleet able to counter Venetian maritime power. He also aimed to bring the patriarch of Aquileia under the obedience of the Hungarian Church, to support all of Venice’s rivals in Italy and elsewhere and to instigate a new Genoese-Venetian war.

The conquest of Dalmatia opened the way for the use of Dalmatian ports as a base of operation against the Republic of St. Mark. Zadar and Ragusans received particular attention from the king, who encouraged them to develop their trade relations with the Levant.⁵⁶ Through Louis’ mediation, Ragusa obtained a pontifical privilege to trade with the Turkish emirates; the king also granted to the Ragusans the staple right which forced the foreign merchants, namely the Venetians, to sell their merchandise in the Dalmatian town. Step by step, the king of Hungary aimed to contest Venetian supremacy in the Adriatic and to replace it with the hegemony of his subjects.⁵⁷

The challenge against Venetian hegemony in the Adriatic was further worsened by an article of the Venetian-Genoese treaty of 1355 which allowed the Ligurian merchants to enter, to navigate and to trade in the Adriatic Sea.⁵⁸ This stipulation was benign as long as Venice preserved its control in the Adriatic, but could have been proven catastrophic in the event of a rival power being introduced to control the shores of the aforementioned sea.⁵⁹ Such was the case after the situation after Louis the Great’s conquest of Dalmatia and the alliance between the Genoese fleet and the Hungarian armies formed the core of the anti-Venetian strategy.

55 Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 162.

56 Papacostea, *De la guerre du Bosphore*, 345–346; Barisa Krekić, “Mleci i unutrašnost Balkana u cetnaestom veku”, *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* 21 (1982), 14–158.

57 Ljubic, *Listine*, IV, doc. 241, 123: the king wanted that “buccas fluminum Gulfi ad se spectare et pertinere; et quod sibi et suis subditis licebat libere et impune ad dictas buccas et in eis navigare, intrare et exire, imittere et exportare sal et alias quascumque merces pro sue libito voluntatis, sicut et quemadmodum in aliis partibus dicti Gulfi habet.”

58 *Liber iurium Reipublicae Genuensis*, II, ed. E. Ricotti, (Turin, 1867), col. 624: “in gulfum domini ducis et communis Veneciarum”.

59 Papacostea, “*De la guerre du Bosphore*”, 344.

Also strongly connected with the conquest of Dalmatia was the king's intention to build a fleet with the support of the Genoese.⁶⁰ In January 1365, disturbing news reached Venice: the king of Hungary had begun the construction of ten galleys in Nice and in Provence for unknown purposes.⁶¹ The Venetian Senate reacted quickly and instructed Raphayno de Caresini to inquire on the intention of King Louis. Concurrently, an embassy sent to Queen Joanna of Naples (who, as the countess of Provence was directly involved) requested the immediate ceasing of the activities. Venice also requested that similar attempts to build a fleet be strictly forbidden in the future. In the case of a negative answer from the queen, the ambassador was instructed to warn Joanna that any damage provoked to the Venetians would be followed by retaliation.⁶² The outcome of the episode remains unclear; it is possible that Louis eventually abandoned the project. However, the quick and energetic Venetian reaction suggest the building of a war fleet by the Hungarian king was considered as a deadly threat.

All these aspects of Louis' policy underscores that the conquest of Dalmatia in 1358 did not mark the end of the war with Venice. Yet, the conflict was postponed until 1377 for various reasons, including the ambitious policy of the Hungarian king and the consequences of the rise of a new power in the Levant—the Ottoman Turks.

The Hungarian—Venetian Rivalry and the Ottoman Threat

The key moment in the expansion of the Ottomans into Europe is considered to be the occupation of Gallipoli.⁶³ One should add to this event the

60 Ibid. The author points out that two Genoese subjects, Baldassare da Sorba and Simone Doria, held, one after the other the dignity of admiral of Hungarian kingdom.

61 Ljubic, *Listine*, IV, doc. 132, 76.

62 Ibid. 77–78: “quod si galee predictae armabuntur ut est dictum et nobis vel navigiis aut terriis et fidelibus nostris aliquod facient damnum, quoquo modo providebimus et providere intendimus illis remediis que convenient saluti et bono nostro, nec possemus talia ullatenus tollerare”.

63 Peter Charanis, “On the date of the occupation of Gallipoli by the Turks”, *Byzantinoslavica*, 16 (1955), 1113–117 who argued that the event occurred in March 1354 and rejects the hypothesis of G. G. Arnakis, “Gregory Palamas among the Turks and documents of his captivity as historical sources”, *Speculum*, 26 (1951), 104–118 who proposed 1355; see also John Meyendorff, “Greco, Turcs et Juifs en Asie Mineure au XIV^e siècle (en appendice: la date de la prise de Gallipoli)”, *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 1 (1966), 216–217; Kate Fleet, “Early Turkish naval activities”, *Oriente Moderno*, 20 (2001), 1135–137.

conquest by the Ottomans of the emirate of Qarasi which gave them access to the Aegean Sea and, implicitly, the possibility to intensify their raids against Thracia.⁶⁴ Contemporaries seemed to have missed the importance of these events as the previously created naval league refocused its attention first on the southern shores of Anatolia, then on Mamluk Egypt. Only Venice pursued the idea of maintaining a patrolling fleet in the Aegean Sea, but such a view was strongly related to the protection of its own territories. The divergence between former members of the naval league explained its quick disintegration at the end of 1360.⁶⁵

In the same year, the Republic of St. Mark seemed concerned by the actions of the emir of Sinope, who was arming ships in the Black Sea and showing hostile intentions. As a consequence, the captain of the Gulf received instructions to proceed with four galleys in the direction of Constantinople in order to discuss the measures to be taken with the Venetian bailo. The Senate suggested some common action with the Byzantines and even with the Genoese.⁶⁶ Such a project was renewed in 1363 when an embassy was sent to Constantinople to settle various concerns over relations with the emperor as well as discuss the creation of a naval Byzantine-Venetian-Genoese alliance directed this time against the Ottomans.⁶⁷ The league was scheduled for a period of two years, counted no less than eight galleys (four Byzantines, two Venetians and two Genoese) and was aimed to sever the links between the Asiatic and European possessions of the Ottomans. This simple strategic idea had a strong impact on the ideology of the Later Crusades. In fact, it was the cornerstone for the crusades of Nicopolis and Varna⁶⁸ and it would resurface in 1366 during the negotiations between Hungary and Venice concerning a crusade prepared by King

64 Zachariadou, *Trade and crusade*, 64.

65 In March 1360 the Venetian Senate had requested to the papal legate, Pierre de Thomas, the permission to use the Venetian ships included in the league against the emir of Sinope see Freddy Thiriet, *Regestes des deliberations du Senat de Venise concernant la Romanie. I (1329–1399)*, (Paris-Hague: Mouton, 1958), 95. For the relations of the Italian naval powers with the emir of Sinope see Zachariadou, “Gazi Celebi”, 1271–1275. On 19 October 1360 the Venetians found out that Pierre de Thomas had disarmed the pontifical galley and two other ships belonging to the Hospitallers. Thus only one galley had left to fight against the Turks, namely the galley of Crete see Thiriet, *Regestes*, 97; Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade*, 67.

66 Thiriet, *Regestes*, I, 95.

67 F. Thiriet, “Una proposta di lega antiturca tra Venezia, Genova e Bisanzio nel 1363”, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 113 (1955): 321–334.

68 Francisc Pall, “Considerazioni sulla partecipazione veneziana alla crociata antiottomana di Nicopoli (1396)”, *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 7 (1969): 187–197; Şerban

Louis. According to the project, a Venetian fleet had to take actions against the Turks in order to block the communications between their Asiatic and European possessions.⁶⁹ In 1363, the leadership of the league was to be held alternatively by the two Italian Republics, or by John v Palaiologus exclusively in case the emperor intended to take part in the expedition. The project was short-lived as it was undermined from the very beginning by the ancient rivalry between the Italian Republics that had recently been strengthened by a new bone of contention—the island of Tenedos. For Venice, the control of the island was essential for any project against the Turks, while Genoa considered it unacceptable that their rivals should get hold of a place from where they could easily intercept the traffic route towards the Black Sea. The extremely complicated situation in the Levant contributed to the failure of the negotiations. As Freddy Thiriet has pointed out, the project depended on the existence of good relations between Venice and Genoa, between the two cities and Byzantium and also between the two Republics and their colonies. In 1363 none of these conditions were satisfied.⁷⁰

The failure of the project and, especially, the outbreak of the revolt in Crete interrupted the Venetian involvement in the crusade at a moment when other powers seemed prepared to offer their support for the war against the infidels. Under these new circumstances the appeals to Venice to join a crusade made in 1365–1366 by the Pope, the king of Cyprus, Peter of Lusignan, or by count Amedeo of Savoy were rejected one after another.⁷¹

Quite surprisingly, a similar request of King Louis the Great received a positive reply from Venice which is all the more puzzling as the Hungarian expedition was a part of a general crusade project conceived by the Papacy in 1365–1366.⁷²

In 1360–1361, the successes of Peter of Lusignan in Asia Minor as well as the conquest of Vidin by Hungary invigorated hopes for a Holy War aimed to relieve the Eastern Christians from Muslim pressure. With this objective in mind, King Peter I of Cyprus started a journey aimed to receive the

Papacostea, "Gênes, Venise et la croisade de Varna", *Balkanica Posnaniensia*, 8 (1997): 27–37.

69 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 148, 85–86: "ad partes Satalie et ad bucham ad turbandum quod Turchi non possent descendere de partibus Grecie supra Turchiam".

70 Thiriet, "Una proposta", 326.

71 Setton, *Papacy and the Crusade*, I, 291–294.

72 Ibid. 287–289; for the Hungarian project see Norman Housley, "King Louis the Great of Hungary and the Crusades (1342–1382)", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 62 (1984), 2: 192–208.

support of the most important Christian princes.⁷³ In parallel, Emperor John v Palaiologus went to Buda to ask Louis I of Hungary to launch an attack against the Ottomans.⁷⁴ On 18 April, in a letter to Emperor John v, Pope Urban v was optimistic about the prospects of an action against the infidels with the participation of the Hospitallers, the marquis of Montferrat, and the Genoese.⁷⁵ On January 1366, another papal letter announced confidently that the armies of Louis I of Anjou were approaching Constantinople by land, while Peter of Lusignan and Amedeo of Savoy troops approached by sea.⁷⁶

This was the background for the negotiations of Venice with the king of Hungary, which can be traced back to 1356.⁷⁷ In the negotiations seeking to solve the dispute over Dalmatia, it was stipulated that Venice had an obligation to arm two galleys so that the king might go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and fight against the Turks and the “Saracens.” The galleys were to be used as long as the Venetian-Hungarian peace was observed.⁷⁸ Interrupted by the outbreak of the Hungarian-Venetian war, these negotiations would be resumed ten years later. This time the king’s intentions seemed to be better defined. Louis requested that two to five galleys should be prepared at his own expense over a period of six months so that he may go in person with a great army by land and by sea in support of the Byzantine Empire against the Ottomans.⁷⁹

73 Peter of Lusignan’s travel included Rhodes, Venice, Genoa, Avignon (where he met not only the pope but also the king of France, John the Good), London, Prague and Krakow. In the capital of Poland Peter of Lusignan carried out negotiations with the German emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg, the king of Hungary and the king of Poland see Malgorzata Dabrowska, “Peter of Cyprus and Casimir the Great in Cracow”, *Byzantiaka*, 14 (1994): 257–267. For the crusading policy of Peter I see Peter Edbury, “The Crusading policy of king Peter I of Cyprus, 1359–1369”, *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the period of the Crusades*, ed. Peter M. Holt, (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1977), 90–105.

74 Francisc Pall, “Encore une fois sur le voyage diplomatique de Jean v Paleologue en 1365–1366”, *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 9 (1971), 3: 535–540; Joseph Gill, “John v Palaeologus at the court of Louis I of Hungary (1366)”, *Byzantinoslavica*, 38 (1977), 1: 31–38.

75 *Acta Urbani Pp. V (1362–1370)*, ed. Aloysius Tautu, (Vatican, 1964), doc. 74, 122–123: “certam unionem quorundam fidelium cum aparatibus galearum et armigerarum gentium”.

76 *Ibid.* doc. 90, 148–149; for the context Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 1, 287.

77 Thiriet, *Regestes*, 1, 237.

78 *Ibid.* It is unclear whether the Turks mentioned in the document were the Ottomans. As a matter of fact there is little reason to believe that the king intended to go on a crusade to Jerusalem. It was only a tactic to gain the benevolence of the papal legate Pierre de Thomas. Documents posterior to 1356 suggest that Louis I was far more interested in checking off the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans.

79 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 168, 85–86: Louis pretended to have renounced his previous project directed against the Holy Land or Egypt to protect the Venetian trade against any

Venice not only responded favourably to the demand, but also was eager to prepare the aforementioned fleet at its own expense. The only condition was that King Louis should not use the galleys against Byzantium or against the emirs of Teologo (Aydin) and Palatia (Menteshe) to whom the Republic was bound by peace treaties.⁸⁰

The Republic's favourable answer to the Hungarian project may be easily understood. The Venetians must have believed that support of the king's crusade would remove the danger from their borders, while a refusal could have provoked Louis' anger. Such fear was doubled by the concern provoked by the crusade of Amadeo of Savoy. The involvement of some Genoese and Provençal ships in the expedition of the "Green Count" inspired Venice to take special measures in Romania. Before the aforementioned expedition started, the bailo of Negroponte was required to arm the galley of the island that was to escort the convoy directed to the Black Sea up to the Bosphorus. Later, after the conquest of Gallipoli by Amadeo, the Senate instructed the bailo of Constantinople to deploy any actions aimed to protect Venetian ships and merchants since the presence of the Genoese galleys in the fleet of the count of Savoy was perceived as a potential threat.⁸¹ Venice was also concerned about the real target of the count's crusade. In the previous year, the sack of Alexandria by Peter of Lusignan had caused important damage to Venetian trade and froze all diplomatic contacts with the sultan of Cairo. In 1366, the Republic suspected that the real target of the crusade of Amadeo of Savoy was again Egypt.⁸² Eventually, the Savoyard crusade was more an expedition for the rescue of the emperor John V, cousin of Amadeo, who was from prevented from returning to Constantinople from Buda by the Bulgarian tsar, Ivan Alexander. This is why after the conquest of Gallipoli, Amadeo besieged and occupied the Bulgarian towns of Mesembria and Sozopolis, thus obtaining the release of his imperial relative.⁸³

damage. In turn, the Venetian Republic praised the king for his benevolence towards the Venetians.

80 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, I, 288 underlined the distrust between Venice and Hungary.

81 Thiriet, *Regestes*, I, 435–436.

82 Only in June 1366 such fears were dispelled see Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, I, 294. The consequences of the sack of Alexandria for the European trade are underlined in Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages*, (Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey, 1983), 88–102.

83 Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades. From Lyons to Alcazar 1274–1580*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 68.

The caution shown by Venice was justified as, despite all the negotiations, Hungary was not involved in the crusade of Amadeo of Savoy.⁸⁴ Although on 24 July 1366, Louis asked Doge Marco Corner for naval support and inquired about the place where the Hungarian forces were to make junction with the fleet,⁸⁵ two months later the king expressed his concerns about the expenses incurred by Venice with the preparation of the fleet and, also, about the maintaining of the Republic's good relations with the Turkish emirates. Louis the Great's lack of action made Venice reluctant to embrace any similar crusading projects. The relations with Louis of Anjou became strained once again and the Republic expressed an interest in settling an agreement with the Ottomans. The opportunity appeared in April 1368 when the Senate was informed by Orio Pasqualigo, the former bailo of Constantinople, that the emir Murad intended to grant a privilege for the Venetians to settle in his territories (*in partibus Turchie*).⁸⁶ The Venetians were willing to accept the offer and wanted to settle down at Scutari (Uskudar), a settlement on the Bosphorus facing Constantinople.⁸⁷ However, the project was never put into practice. This may be because the Venetians requested to be exempt from trade taxes as well as permission to fortify the settlement.⁸⁸

Besides this episode, the available information about Venetian-Ottoman contacts in the period is extremely scarce and unclear. It seems that periods of tension alternated with attempts to settle a treaty. In July 1374 various reports from Romania pointed out that John V and Murad I were preparing a

84 Jehan Servion, *Geste et Chroniques de la Mayson de Savoye*, II, (Turin, 1879), 125 mentions a Savoyard embassy to Buda aimed to inform king Louis that in May 1366 the crusading army would be in Gallipoli and asking for a joint actions in support of the Byzantine empire "que en ce temps il se treuve la car a layde Dieu & la sienna nous donrons secours a lempereur & au pays". After the emperor John V was released the count of Savoy expressed his disappointment towards the Hungarian king "se le roi Andrieu (sic) de Hongrie fut venus par terre pour vous secourir, comme il mavoit mandez par son chevalier, lui & moy eussions pris telle vengeance des outrages faites a vous (= John V) qui en fut perpetuelle memoire & non obstant quil ne soit pas venus, a layde de Dieu iay tant fait que estes hors de prison".

85 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 149, 86–87.

86 Gheorghe I. Brătianu, "Les Vénitiens dans la mer Noire au XIV^e siècle après a deuxième guerre des Détroits", *Echos d'Orient* 33 (1934): 158 argued that the negotiations were the result of the expedition of Amadeo of Savoy. For Brătianu, the Ottoman-Venetian negotiations explain the reserves shown by the Republic to Hungarian projects and also the Venetian refuse to take possessions of Gallipoli.

87 Thiriet, *Régestes*, I, 118; Brătianu, "Les Vénitiens", 156 believed that the Venetian choice was intended to compete with Genoese Pera.

88 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 165, 92–93; Thiriet, *Régestes*, I, 118.

fleet intended to harm the Venetian convoy towards the Black Sea. The captain of the Gulf, Pietro Mocenigo, was instructed to send one of his best ships to the island of Tenedos, and even beyond this point, in order to get accurate information about these preparations.⁸⁹ After this episode, there is evidence of a new attempt to settle an alliance. A Venetian fleet, sent into the Straits to compel John v Palaeologus to accept the signing of an agreement, was instructed, in case of failure, to contact Murad I in an attempt to revive the project of 1368. The acceptance of John v Palaiologos should not exclude the idea of Venetian-Ottoman diplomatic contacts if we take into account that, at that moment, the *basileus* was a tributary to Murad I, and was involved in a military campaign led by the emir.⁹⁰

From the “War of Tenedos” to the Crusade of Nicopolis

The vicissitudes of Venetian-Hungarian relations, as well as the Venetian-Genoese rivalry and Ottoman expansion, explain why towards the end of the fourteenth century the Republic of Saint Mark tried to pursue a more aggressive policy in certain areas of the Mediterranean. An unsuccessful attempt to expel the Genoese from the island of Cyprus, a cornerstone of the maritime trade routes towards Alexandria and Beirut, was followed by an important step aimed to secure and strengthen the Venetian presence in the Black Sea. After the mid-fourteenth century, the Republic expressed its interest in occupying the island of Tenedos, a small piece of land situated near the Dardanelles Straits which belonged to the Byzantine Empire. After long and tedious negotiations, in 1376, the emperor John v Palaiologos handed over Tenedos to the Venetians on the condition that a Byzantine-Venetian condominium should be established and that the Greek population should be allowed to preserve their Orthodox faith.

The diplomatic success provoked a quick Genoese reaction as the Ligurian Republic considered the Venetian occupation of Tenedos a threat against its own supremacy in the Black Sea. The Genoese tried to cancel the emperor's decision and then to use military means to expel the Venetians from Tenedos. As both attempts failed, the unsolved dispute led to a new Genoese-Venetian war, also known as the “War of Tenedos” or the “War of Chioggia.” The outbreak of the conflict occurred in difficult circumstances for the Venetians who were confronted by a large coalition which included the Genoese, the kingdom

89 Thiriet, *Régestes*, I, 134.

90 Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 309.

of Hungary and several enemies from the Italian Peninsula (among them the lord of Padua, Francesco of Carrara). Soon enough Venice suffered two major setbacks. The fleet led by Vettor Pisani was destroyed at Pola, which enabled the Genoese to gain the upper hand in the Adriatic and to block the Republic of St. Mark from the sea. The blockade was followed by the occupation of Chioggia, which held a significant position in the Venetian defensive system. The conquest of Chioggia opened the way to the complete encirclement of Venice and, eventually, to its capitulation. Venice initiated peace talks but the outrageous terms offered by Hungary, the Genoese and their allies prompted Venice to abandon the negotiations and continue the war. According to the Venetian chronicles, Louis I of Hungary asked that his coat of arms be put up in San Marco square, that the Venetian doge was to be confirmed by the king, and that the Republic pay an annual tribute of 50,000 ducats with an additional 500,000 ducats in damages. From the point of view of the Venetians, such terms were proof that the Hungarian king wanted to turn the subjects of the Republic into slaves and that the only way to overcome the crisis was to continue the war.

Venice tried to resist by a large mobilization of all its subjects. The government promised to recognise the aristocratic status of all the families willing to contribute with money, weapons, or men to the war effort. Measures were taken to strengthen the fortifications and the fleet operating in the eastern Mediterranean under the command of Carlo Zeno was recalled. Meanwhile, the defense was entrusted to Vettor Pisani, who was blamed and put into jail after defeat at Pola, but who enjoyed huge popularity among the common people. Owing to an outstanding mobilization, Venice was able to recapture Chioggia and to break the enemies' blockade. The decisive blow was dealt by the fleet led by Carlo Zeno who defeated the Genoese and thus was able to bring home a large booty from the Levant.

These events turn the tides of the war and enabled Venice to re-open peace negotiations in Turin, under the mediation of the count Amadeo of Savoy. The peace talks confirmed the pre-war situation with one exception. The Venetians were to withdraw from Tenedos and the fortifications built there were to be destroyed. The measure encountered strong opposition from many members of the Venetian aristocracy, among them Zanachi Mudazzo (the Venetian bailo of Tenedos) who refused to comply with the terms of the peace treaty. Eventually, despite strong opposition, the peace of Turin was observed most likely because Venice could not afford a new confrontation with Genoa and its allies. The wounds suffered during the "war of Tenedos" were deep and slow to heal. Until the end of the fourteenth century the fleet saw a dramatic decrease in numbers which had serious consequences for the volume of trade. As a result, in the

period that followed, the Venetian's policy in the Aegean and the Black Sea was excessively prudent both in relation to their old rivals—the Genoese—and to the Ottomans whose steady rise altered considerably the balance of power. One may even assert that gradually, from 1381 to 1402, a major change of focus could be perceived in Venetian policy in the Eastern Mediterranean: the rivalry with Genoa (a dominant feature throughout the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries) was progressively replaced with the struggle to contain the Ottomans' expansion.

It is true that the interest of the Italian naval powers in exerting control in the Black Sea and the Aegean remained, and the Genoese-Venetian rivalry continued; nevertheless, the Ottoman threat, the anarchy in the Golden Horde, and the irreversible decline of Byzantium changed drastically the background of the Genoese-Venetian clash for hegemony. A significant turn occurred towards the end of the fourteenth century when the collapse of Constantinople seemed imminent. In 1396, Genoa and Venice opened negotiations aimed to support the fight for the survival of the Byzantine Empire and to keep open the trade routes which linked the Black Sea with other regions of the Mediterranean. Until then, however, the tensions between the two Republics remained strong even if the peace treaty of Turin settled the main bone of contention concerning the island of Tenedos. Soon after the aforementioned peace settlement the Genoese sealed a treaty with the khan of the Golden Horde, Toqtamış. The new pact granted the Ligurian Republic considerable territorial concessions and, most important, recognised the autonomy of Caffa. Even if hindered by a conflict between the Tatars and the Genoese (1383–1387), the agreement was eventually reconfirmed by a new treaty (12 August 1387), which marked the success of the Genoese in their relations with the Golden Horde.⁹¹

While their rivals were strengthening their positions in the Black Sea, Venice was carrying out a cautious policy, seeking to avoid a new war with Genoa and to find a way of collaboration with the khan. In this respect the Senate decided in 1386 that the khan's subjects trading in Tana should be exempted for the tax because "such thing could be highly displeasing to the Tatar emperor and to his officials."⁹² Trade at Tana continued to interest the Venetian Republic even after the devastating attack of Timur Lenk, which in 1395–1396 systematically destroyed all the commercial centres situated in the Golden Horde's area of

91 Virgil Ciocîltan, "Reichspolitik und Handel: die tatarisch-genuesischen Verträge von 1380–1387", *Il Mar Nero* 1 (1994): 261–278; Id. *The Mongols and Black Sea Trade*, 225–240.

92 N. Iorga, "Veneția în Marea Neagră. I. Dobrotici", *Analele Academiei Române. Memorie Secției Istorice*, 36 (1914), 1, doc. xx, 1070; Fr. Thiriet, *Régestes*, no. 708, 171.

domination.⁹³ The destruction inflicted heavy losses not only for the Tatars but also for Venice and its subjects. The Venetian consul, Giorgio Capello, was killed along with many other merchants and all the damages were evaluated at around 100,000 ducats.⁹⁴ After Timur Lenk's blow, Venice took the opportunity to ask the Golden Horde khan's permission to fortify the Venetian settlement⁹⁵ at Tana, which recovered very slowly from the losses. The request did not receive a favourable answer which explains why the convoy directed each year towards Tana was interrupted until 1406.⁹⁶

The strained relations with the Golden Horde and Genoese policy in the Northern Black Sea forced Venice to focus its attention towards other regions. One such area was the Western shores of the Black Sea where a local lord, Dobrotici, controlled several key points. It was an area in which the Venetian merchants previously obtained privileges from the Bulgarian tsar, Ivan Alexander, in 1347 and 1352.

Concurrently, in order to reconsolidate their positions in the Levant, the Venetians pursued a policy of territorial acquisitions.⁹⁷ Venice bought Corfu from King Charles III of Naples, took under the Republic's administration the islands of Tynos and Mykonos that had been ruled until 1390 by a Venetian family and occupied Durazzo and Scutari (in Albania) and Lepanto, Patras, Argos, Nauplion (in Peloponnese). Such expansion provoked Genoa's counter-response. The Genoese opened negotiations with the king of Naples in order to purchase the island of Corfu⁹⁸ and tried also to occupy Zonchio (Navarin),

93 Thiriet, *Régestes*, no. 676, 164; no. 709, 171; no. 728, 175; for the Venetian presence at Tana at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries see Bernard Doumerc, "Les Vénitiens à La Tana (Azov) au XV^e siècle", *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 28 (1987), 1: 5–19.

94 Doumerc, "Les Vénitiens à La Tana", 6.

95 N. Iorga, "Veneția în Marea Neagră. II. Legăturile cu turcii și cu creștinii din Balcani de la lupta de la Kossovo până la cea de la Nicopole (1389–1396)", *Analele Academiei Române. Memorie Secției Istorice*, 36 (1914), doc. 52. One should note the Venetian uncertainty about the internal situation of the Golden Horde. The Venetians had no idea about who was at that very moment the ruler of the Horde as the document states "we believe that Toqtamish is still the ruler". In 1397 the Venetians renewed their plea to fortify their settlement and send an embassy led by Andrea Giustiniani, see Doumerc, "Les Vénitiens à La Tana", 6.

96 *Ibid.* doc. 52.

97 See also the very useful table made by Benjamin Arbel, "Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period", *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, ed. Eric Dursteler, (Brill: Leiden-Boston), 2013, 132–136.

98 Freddy Thiriet, *Délibérations des assemblées vénitienes concernant la Roumanie*. 1. 1160–1363, (Mouton & Co: Paris-the Hague, 1966), no. 848, 54.

a settlement situated 12 km north of Modon and Coron, two vital centres on the route which linked Venice and Constantinople.⁹⁹

The Ottoman threat put a stop to the Genoese-Venetian rivalry. During the reign of Murad I, Ottoman-Venetian relations seemed to be peaceful. In 1381, Pantaleone Barbo, the bailo in Constantinople, was instructed to send a messenger to the sultan—described as the friend of the Republic—in order to ensure the continuance of good relations.¹⁰⁰ Three years later the sultan asked for Venetian support against the Genoese of Pera, but the request was politely rejected as long as the Republic of Saint Mark intended to observe the peace of Turin.¹⁰¹

The situation changed drastically under the reign of Bayezid I. Both Venice and Genoa saw their interests affected by the blows dealt by the Sultan Bayezid I to the Christian powers in the Balkans, the Aegean and the Black Sea and to the Turkish emirates in Asia Minor. In this later respect Bayezid conquered the emirates of Mentеше and Aydin, two former commercial partners of Venice. To this political expansion the sultan added some economic measures, such as the export of grains from the territory subjected to his authority. Such interdiction was maintained even after the Venetians agreed to pay an excessively high tax for every measure of grain purchased.¹⁰² Moreover the situation worsened when Sultan Bayezid began to gather a flotilla aimed to cut the maritime routes which passed through the straits towards the Black Sea. In 1393, sixty Ottoman ships of various types blocked access in the Dardanelles and severed the link between the Aegean and the Black Sea.¹⁰³ In these circumstances Venice was compelled to think of a military solution. As early as June of 1388 an attempt was made to gather Genoa, Venice and the Hospitallers of Rhodes into an anti-Ottoman league.¹⁰⁴ The project was short-lived but was renewed several years later. This time Hungary was the main Christian power interested in organizing a crusade against the Ottoman threat.

99 Ibid. no. 871, 63 (abstract) and 297 (full document).

100 Iorga, "Veneția în Marea Neagră. I. Dobrotici", 1064; Thiriet, *Régestes*, I, no. 611, 150–151.

101 Iorga, "Veneția în Marea Neagră. II. Legăturile", doc. 1, 23: "Sicut toti mundo extat notorium, nuper firmavimus pacem cum Ianuensibus quam pacem ipsi Ianuenses nobis observaverunt et observant et versa vice nos eam observavimus et observare intendimus pro honore et fama nostril dominii"; see also Zachariadou, *Trade and Crusade*, 73–75.

102 Elizabeth Zachariadou, "Prix et marchés des céréales en Roumanie (1343–1405)", *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 51 (1977), 3–4: 298–300. The destruction of Tana explain why the Venetians were eager to pay even an onerous price for the grain.

103 *The Morosini Codex. II. Marino Falier to Antonio Venier (1354–1400)*, ed. by Michele Pietro Ghezzi, John R. Melville-Jones, Andrea Rizzi, (Padova, 2000), 192–194.

104 Thiriet, *Régestes*, I, no. 739, 178; Balard, *La Roumanie*, I, 95–97.

At that moment King Sigismund of Luxemburg had his own concerns about Ottoman expansion and was forced to react after several attacks led by the Turks against neighbouring Wallachia. His interest in supporting the fight against the sultan encountered several difficulties. At that time the papacy was only able to provide moral support as the Western Church was disrupted by the “Great Schism.” Moreover, the Hundred Years War made highly improbable any involvement of French and English knights in any expedition in Orient. Finally, but no less important, relations between Hungary and Venice were strained which made any collaboration quite difficult. But the context seemed to be quite favourable for the preparation of a new crusade against the infidels around 1395. There were serious peace talks between France and England and both parts agreed that the long-lasting war was a divine punishment. Both kings were eager to redeem their sins and the crusade was conceived as the perfect tool not only to ensure peace, but also to put an end to the “Great Schism” and as the first step for the union of Christendom.¹⁰⁵ Talks about a crusade to “Outremer” were held by the representatives of France, England and Burgundy in 1390 at Amiens. Next year the duke of Burgundy, Philipp the Bold, sent Guy de la Trémouille to Venice for the same purpose and in 1392 the king of France, Charles VI, negotiated with Genoa for naval support for the expedition. The King of England, Richard II, tried also to prepare for the crusade by sending his emissaries towards Central Eastern Europe. John Holand, Earl of Huntingdon, negotiated in Venice and in Hungary, John Golofre was sent in Poland while John Beaufort dialogued with the Grand Master of the Teutonic knights.¹⁰⁶ All these details point to the fact that the objective of the holy expedition was not set from the beginning. Some voices supported an expedition towards Prussia, others a crusade against the Ottomans. Only in 1394 did the latter point of view prevail. In September of the same year King Sigismund announced to Venice that he decided to launch an offensive against the Turks next May and asked the Republic for naval support.¹⁰⁷ The final negotiations should have been held between the Western representatives, the Venetians and the Hungarians in Venice in January 1395.¹⁰⁸ At that moment the involvement of the Republic was

105 J. J. N. Palmer, *England, France and Christendom (1377–1399)*, (Routledge and Keegan Hall: London, 1972), 181–186.

106 All the details about these missions in Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, 198–202; Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 74–75.

107 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 476, 335–336; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, I, 342–343.

108 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 482, 338. On 23 December 1394 the Venetians informed the Byzantine ambassador that the emissaries of France, Burgundy, England and Hungary were expected to arrive soon in the lagoon.

not decided yet and the final decision in this respect depended on the success of the negotiations. But in January only the Western representative, Guy de la Trémouille, was in Venice. He postponed his return by a month and finally went back to Burgundy on 4 February, 1395¹⁰⁹ without meeting the Hungarian embassy led by the archbishop of Esztergom, John of Kanisza.¹¹⁰ Only in March did the Hungarian embassy finally arrive in the lagoon and open negotiations with the Venetian government. Such lack of coordination had serious consequences. France, England and the dukes of Orleans and Lancaster abandoned the project and only the duke of Burgundy decided to continue the preparations for the crusade.¹¹¹ One may assume that Venice also adjusted its plans. In reply to the Hungarian embassy, the Republic pointed out that involvement in the crusade would jeopardize all Venetian merchants who traded in the Turkish regions.¹¹² Still, Venice was ready to provide a quarter of a fleet (25 galleys maximum) aimed to sever communications between the European and Asian provinces of the sultan. Also, Venice mentioned that its involvement in the war against the infidels will last as long as the king of Hungary and his allies will remain in the campaign.¹¹³ Venice was determined to respect its commitments even if the kings of France and England would have abandoned the project. However, support from the Republic was conditional on the involvement of the king of Poland, the king of Bosnia and of the duke of Austria.¹¹⁴

Finally, the so-called “crusade of Nicopolis” started as a Burgundian and Hungarian affair. The chronology, the events and the outcome of the expedition

109 Venice insisted and convinced Guy de la Trémouille to wait the Hungarian embassy and wrote in this respect to the duke of Burgundy, Philipp the Bold see Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 483, 338.

110 Ibid. doc. 484, 339; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, I, 343.

111 Palmer, *England, France and Christendom*, 203. The author underlines that the abandon was due also to other reasons such as the matrimonial projects of Richard II and the new tensions in the Anglo-French relations.

112 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 487, 340: “quod volentes habere respectum et utilitatem et commodum mercatorum nostrorum, qui in bono numero et cum magnis quantitibus personarum conversantur in terris Turchorum”.

113 Ibid. “per mare ponere et mittere ad nostras expensas ad ipsum transitum prohibendum quartam partem galearum, que ponetur per alios christianos ad obstaculum et resistentiam supradictam, non transeundo numero galearum vigintiquinque, hoc modo videlicet, quod si armata erit et si per omnes ponentur xxv galee, nos ponemus sex, si viginti, ponemus quinque et cet., que galee nostre vacabunt et stabunt ad dictum opus tantum, quantum stabunt galee aliorum et quantum maiestas sua et alii domini predicti ad persecutionem et destructionem Turchorum stabunt in partibus antedictis”.

114 Ibid. doc. 488, 343; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, I, 344.

are well known.¹¹⁵ Less clear are the actions of the fleet. In February 1396 four Venetian galleys were already *in partibus Romanie* but the captain of the Gulf was instructed to avoid any clash with the Ottoman ships.¹¹⁶ In April the Venetians expressed their concern about the slow preparations of the crusade and their impression that the expedition seemed to rely only on Hungarian forces. Even in these circumstances the Venetians assured King Sigismund that the Venetian fleet would wait for Christian forces from July until the middle of August. Sigismund was asked to keep the Venetian commander informed about the progress of the crusade and especially if the expedition was cancelled.¹¹⁷

The naval strength of the crusade of Nicopolis seems to have been composed exclusively of Venetian and Hospitaller knights' ships. Nevertheless, there was no joint action or coordination between the two squadrons and it seems that each fleet followed its own plan. This situation was caused by older disputes between the Order and the Republic,¹¹⁸ but also by the fact that Venice recognised the authority of the Roman pontif, Boniface IX, while the Hospitallers were faithful to the Avignon pope, Benedict XIII.

The Venetians were unable to break through the Straits because of defensive measures undertaken by Bayezid I at Gallipoli.¹¹⁹ For this reason, the Venetian galleys may have stopped at Tenedos. As a matter of fact, Francisc Pall suggested that the episode regarding the Venetian ships' entrance on the Danube was

115 See Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1934); Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades from Lyons to Alcazar 1274–1580*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 76–79; for the Burgundian and French involvement in the expedition see the old but still valuable book of J. Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient au XIV^e siècle*, I–II, Paris, 1885–1886; Henry L. Savage, “Enguerrand de Coucy VII and the Campaign of Nicopolis”, *Speculum*, 14 (1939), 423–442; the special issue of *Annales de Bourgogne*, 68 (1996), especially the articles of Jim Magee, “Le temps de la croisade bourguignonne: l’expédition de Nicopolis”, 49–58, Bertrand Schnerb, “Le contingent franco-bourguignon à la croisade de Nicopolis”, 59–75 and Norman Housley, “Le Maréchal Boucicaut à Nicopolis”, 85–99. For the various interpretations of the defeat by the contemporary sources see Ovidiu Cristea, “La Croisade de Nicopolis (1396). Controverses autour d’une bataille”, in *Worlds in Change: Church Union and Crusading in Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (= Transylvanian Review, 18 (2009), special issue no.2) ed. by Christian Gastgeber, Ioan Aurel Pop, Oliver Jens Schmitt and Alexandru Simon, (Cluj-Napoca, 2009), 31–55.

116 Iorga, “Veneția în Marea Neagră. II. Legăturile”, doc. 54, 47.

117 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 513, 364; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, I, 346.

118 Anthony Luttrell, “Venice and the knights Hospitallers of Rhodes in the Fourteenth Century”, *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 26 (1958): 195–212.

119 Iorga, “Veneția în Marea Neagră. II. Legăturile”, doc. 56, 47–48: “de potentia Basiti, que multiplicat in partibus et loco Galipolis, tam de gentibus, quam navigijs, cum quibus magis vigilare videtur ad damnum christianorum euntium et redeuntium per strictum.”

just a tale of the Venetian chroniclers who were eager to underline, on the one hand, the Republic's attachment to the crusade and, on the other, the ingratitude of the King of Hungary who, in 1396, owed his salvation to the Venetian galleys.¹²⁰ The Hospitallers' fleet headed from Rhodes towards Smyrna, but from this point on, the itinerary is very hard to know. Jean Christian Poutiers assumed that the ships commanded by Philibert of Naillac might have entered the Black Sea and the Danube.¹²¹ Should this scenario prove correct, it might explain the way in which Sigismund of Luxemburg reached Constantinople after the defeat.

The results of the naval expedition from 1396 are far from being spectacular. The fleet could not make the junction with the land forces and was not able to stop the disaster of September 25, 1396. The sultan's victory compelled Venice to take defensive measures not only for its own territories, but also in Constantinople, which was in a dire situation. After the success of Nicopolis, Bayezid I was willing to grant the Venetians peace "on sea", but not also on land, where he claimed the Venetian possessions Argos, Nauplion, Atena, Durazzo and Scutari. Venice, in turn, wished to get an agreement for its possessions in the Peloponnese and Albania, but refused to accept peace on sea because of increasing activity by Turkish pirates.¹²² Given these conditions, the last years of the fourteenth century were very difficult for Venetian possessions in Romania.

The exceptional measures taken by Venice to defend Constantinople and Pera as well as the reopening of negotiations with Genoa for the fortification of Tenedos clearly indicates the interests of the Venetian government to maintain open the maritime routes towards the Black Sea. Far from believing that efforts to protect trade in a remote region was no longer necessary, both Genoa and Venice tried at any cost to preserve their settlements and their privileges in the area. Furthermore, both naval powers sought to preserve Christian control of Constantinople. The Byzantine capital was vital for their interests since the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans would have severed commercial routes to Caffa, Tana and Trebizond.

120 Francisc Pall, "Considerazioni sulla partecipazione veneziana alla crociata antiottomana di Nicopoli (1396)", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 7 (1969): 187–197. For the Venetian view towards King Sigismund see for instance *The Morosini Codex*, II, 196.

121 Jean-Christian Poutiers, "Les Chevaliers de Rhodes à la croisade de Nikopol (1396)", *Etudes Balkaniques* 17 (1981), 1: 89–123.

122 Ljubić, *Listine*, IV, doc. 553, 404.

Kilia as an Outpost in Hungary's Crusading Projects

The threat persisted until 1402 when the defeat of sultan Bayezid I in the battle of Ankara and the successive crisis provoked by the struggle for power between his sons gave a respite to Christian powers. One of the first actions of Bayezid's successor, Suleyman, was to offer extremely generous terms to Byzantium, Genoa and Venice.¹²³ He made important territorial concessions; he renounced the tribute paid by the Byzantines and promised that his ships will not navigate outside the Straits without the permission of Byzantium, Genoa and Venice. But such favourable treatment was short-lived. The struggle for succession among Bayezid's sons ended in the victory of Mehmed I and the Ottoman Empire reassumed its position as a major power in the area. Such Ottoman revival was not only the result of Mehmed I's political and military abilities but also resulted in part from the permanent rivalry between Christian powers. Venice, for instance, had its own disputes with Genoa and Hungary. The war with Genoa started again in 1403 and despite the Venetian victory in the Battle of Modon the conflict brought no change in the balance of power between the two Italian Republics. Venice also reopened the conflict with Hungary in 1411 for Dalmatia and reconquered the territory lost during the reign of Louis I the Great. No wonder that under such circumstances any crusading project against the Turks had no chance to be put into practice despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire regained its vigour and expansion under the reign of Mehmed I. Soon enough the sultan resumed the naval policy of his father and began to concentrate a large number of ships in Gallipoli aiming to attack the Aegean islands. A raid against Negroponte determined the Venetian reaction. The sultan's fleet was destroyed at Gallipoli in 1416 but the war that followed ended with a peace which may be considered only partly a Venetian success.¹²⁴ The treaty stipulated interdiction for Ottoman ships to sail out from the Straits into the Aegean. Although the clause had been included also in the previous treaty of 1403, the Ottomans failed to observe it.

123 George T. Dennis, "The Byzantine-Turkish Treaty of 1403", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 33 (1967): 72–88; more recently Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "Süleyman çelebi in Rumili and the Ottoman chronicles", *Der Islam* 60 (1983), 2, 268–296 (especially 270–271); Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins. Politics and Society in the Late Empire*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 33–34; Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid. Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413*, (Brill: Leiden-Boston), 2007, 50–59.

124 Camilo Manfroni, "La battaglia di Gallipoli e la politica Veneto-Turca (1381–1420)", *Ateneo Veneto*, 25 (1902), 1: 3–34; second part in *Ateneo Veneto* 25 (1902), 2: 129–169; Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, 355–356.

The Venetian-Ottoman war of 1415–1419 was a bitter lesson. Although victorious on the sea, Venice eventually lost the war and the peace. Venice had maritime superiority but its land forces were no match for Ottoman troops, a detail which in the long run proved to be decisive. The negative outcome of the conflict underscored a simple fact: in order to defeat the Ottomans, the Republic had to rely either on a strong land army or on strong allies. As both requirements were difficult to fulfill, Venice decided to adopt a defensive stance and avoided the use of arms to solve disputes with the sultan until 1430.¹²⁵

Such cautious policy was also justified by the collusion between the Ottomans and the Genoese. After the end of the reign of Bayezid, the Ligurian Republic resumed its good relations with the Ottomans established since the middle of the fourteenth century. In 1421 Genoese ships transported Murad II's troops that aimed to suppress the revolt of the pretender Düzme Mustafa¹²⁶ and later a similar action was performed by the Genoese in 1444 when the sultan was confronted with the crusading armies.

All these political and military developments considerably transformed the conditions for navigation and trade in the Black Sea in the first half of the fifteenth century. There was also a significant change of the main actors involved in the struggle for domination in the area. The decline of the Golden Horde created the conditions for the emergence of new political entities (such Wallachia and Moldavia) and of new trade routes which passed through these territories; the so called "Wallachian road," which linked the mouths of Danube with Southern Transylvania and Central Europe, and the "Moldavian road," which connected the important trade centre of Lwow in southern Poland with the ports of Akkerman/Moncastro at the mouth of Dniestr and Kilia/Licostomo at the mouths of Danube. The control of these trade routes was a bone of contention between the Kingdom of Hungary, on one side, and the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, on the other, a dispute which involved soon other powers in the region such as Kingdom of Poland and the Ottoman Empire. Already in 1419/1420 an Ottoman campaign towards the Lower Danube led by Sultan Mehmed I Celebi included Kilia and Akkerman among the targets.¹²⁷

125 Manfroni, "La battaglia di Gallipoli", 157–158.

126 See Doukas, *The Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, ed. by Harry J. Magoulias, (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1975), xxv, 150–151 and David Balfour, *Politico-historical Works of Symeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica (1416/17 to 1429)*, (Vienna, 1979), 39–69.

127 Viorica Pervain, "Lupta antiotomană a Țărilor Romane în anii 1419–1420", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca* 19 (1976): 73–75; Virgil Ciociltan, "Competiția pentru controlul Dunării inferioare", *Revista de Istorie*, 35 (1982): 1191–1203;

It is a clear sign of Ottoman interest in the two trade centres, an interest renewed during the reign of Mehmed II and Bayezid II. Both ports also had a strategic value, and Kilia played a crucial part in crusading projects from the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg until the fall of Constantinople. Already in 1396, after the defeat of Nicopolis, King Sigismund strengthened Kilia and Kaliacra against an expected Ottoman attack. The failure of the crusade compelled the king to find other ways to fight against the infidels and an attack launched from the sea, with Kilia as a base of operation, was seen as a better solution than a frontal attack through the Balkans. For this reason, Sigismund reacted when, sometime at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Kilia was occupied by the Moldavians. From that moment onwards the king tried, with Wallachian support, to regain the city by military or diplomatic means. A compromise was reached in 1412 at Lubowla (Lublau) between Hungary and Poland. Kilia remained in Moldavian hands but the principality had to contribute to any expedition launched against the infidels. Although the agreement was renewed it hardly satisfied the main actors. Hungary insisted on having direct control of Kilia and the objective was achieved in 1448 when Prince Peter II submitted the city to John Hunyadi, the governor of Hungary. From this moment until 1465, the city and its fortress was theoretically a part of the Wallachian territory but was defended by a Hungarian garrison. John Hunyadi took several measures to fortify Kilia before the fall of Constantinople and, in the same period, tried to develop King Sigismund's project to create a naval base of operation against the Ottomans. In this respect he opened negotiations with the Byzantines aimed to gain the control of Mesembria or Selymbria and, according to Sphrantzes, Emperor Constantine XI agreed to hand over Mesembria.

Although such a naval project in support of Constantinople was never put into practice, it seems that it was a source of concern for the Ottomans. In 1448, for instance, several months after Kilia was once again under Hungarian control, an Ottoman fleet launched an attack against the fortress and a similar action was undertaken in 1453. The city remained in Christian hands until 1484 when an expedition led by Sultan Bayezid II accomplished the conquest of the Black Sea initiated by his father.

The emergence of Wallachia and Moldavia also affected the interests of the Genoese merchants. During the last decade of the fourteenth century

Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "Ottoman Diplomacy and the Danube Frontier (1420–1424)", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 7 (1983): 680–690, Maria-Magdalena Székely and Ștefan S. Gorovei, "Autour des relations moldo-ottomanes", *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe*, 5 (2013): 149–191.



FIGURE 4 The Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God (*detail*). Fresco from Moldovița Monastery.

the Genoese seem to have lost control of Kilia, occupied by Wallachia and Akkerman, which became a part of the Moldavian principality. While relations with Wallachia are still to be clarified by historians, the loss of Akkerman poisoned the long-term relations with the Moldavian lords. Despite some diplomatic contacts which aimed to settle disputes, and despite the growing Ottoman threat, relations between Moldavia and the Genoese from Crimea remained strained until the fall of Caffa in 1475. Thus, one can understand why in 1433 the Moldavian prince invited the Venetians to settle in Akkerman and to establish a permanent trade link between the lagoon and the mouth of Dniestr. The project became operational only in 1435 when the Senate decided that one galley of the convoy directed towards Black Sea should lay anchor in Akkerman. Subsequently, it was decided that Francesco Duodo should be appointed there as a consul.¹²⁸ Such a project was seen as a part of a general revolt against Genoese hegemony in the Black Sea. Șerban Papacostea emphasised that the clashes that occurred in 1433–1434 between the Genoese and several powers of the Black Sea such as Byzantium, the Empire of Trebizond, the Principality of Theodoro (Mangup) and Moldavia were part of a general

128 N. Iorga, *Studii asupra evului mediu românesc*, (Bucharest, 1984), 224.

anti-Genoese policy. Eventually, the Ligurian Republic was able to react and to resume its control in Crimea and the Empire of Trebizond. Moldavia, however, preserved its control over Akkerman but the collaboration with Venice was short-lived and ended in 1439.¹²⁹

Even if we accept that the revolt of 1433–1434 was a part of a general reaction aimed to expel the Genoese from the Black Sea or, on the contrary, that the events represented local reactions against the Genoese hegemony, the clashes underlined the fact that the Ligurian Republic was still able to dominate the minor powers of the area. However, they had serious problems in limiting and repelling Ottoman penetration in the Black Sea region. Recent studies pointed out that the economic expansion of the Ottomans preceded the fall of Constantinople and that some years before 1453 the trade of certain strategic commodities, such as slaves, was no longer in Genoese hands. Such perspective reverses the common opinion that the conquest of the Black Sea area started only after the fall of the Byzantine capital and underscores new insights on the Ottoman methods of conquest.¹³⁰

It seems to be also strengthened by the internal situation of Genoa in the first half of the fifteenth century. The Ligurian Republic not only encountered periods of crisis when authority was assumed by a foreign prince such as the King of France or the Duke of Milan, but once again there were serious tensions between the metropolis and its colonies in the Black Sea. Such tensions explain why Genoa was unable to react to Ottoman progressive expansion in the Black Sea but also the Republic's resignation in front of the aggressive policy of some minor Pontic powers as Moldavia.

The last effective Genoese reaction is related to the preliminaries of the crusade of Varna.¹³¹ The news that the powers involved in the crusade agreed that, in case of success, the Venetians would receive Gallipoli, determined a quick response of the Ligurian Republic. The perspective that their arch-rivals could insert themselves in a key point from which the route towards the Black Sea could have easily re-opened, once again, the way for Ottoman-Genoese col-

129 Matei Cazacu, "Venise et la Moldavie au début du XV^e siècle", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 21 (2003): 137; Ștefan Andreescu, *Din istoria Mării Negre (Genovezi, români și tătari în sațiul pontic în secolele XIV–XVII)*, (Bucharest, 2001), 30.

130 Michel Balard, "Esclavage en Crimée et sources fiscales génoises au XV^e siècle", *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 22 (1996): 9–17; Ștefan Andreescu, *Izvoare noi cu privire la istoria Mării Negre*, (Bucharest, 2005), 42–60.

131 For all the diplomatic and military events during 1438–1444 see John Jefferson, *The Holy Wars of king Wladislas and sultan Murad. The Ottoman-Christian conflict from 1438–1444*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012).

laboration. The sultan's troops were transported from Anatolia in Europe by Genoese ships and such support had a decisive impact on the outcome of the Battle of Varna. Many contemporaries—among them the future pope Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini—accused the Genoese of treachery and described them as false Christians who collaborated with the infidels.¹³²

However, the crusade of Varna was the last significant Genoese reaction to political events in the area. The period which preceded the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans could be defined as a struggle for survival. The Genoese from Crimea tried to gain the support and protection of the King of Poland but eventually such projects had no concrete solutions. In 1475 an Ottoman army led by Ahmed Gedik pasha conquered Crimea and put an end to the period of Italian domination in the area. The Venetians still preserved their faithfulness in a privileged position in the area during the long war against the sultan (1463–1479), but at the end of the conflict they were forced to submit to the sultan's terms. From 1479 onwards the trade in the Black Sea was rigorously controlled by the Porte and every Christian merchant had to comply with sultan's conditions. The history of the Black Sea as a cornerstone of international trade in the Later Middle Ages came to an end.

132 Papacostea, *Genes, Venise et la croisade de Varna*, 27–37.

The Eastern Border and the Struggle for Supremacy in the Northern Black Sea

After the great Mongol invasion from the mid-thirteenth century, the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland claimed the mission to defend Christendom, just as the papacy was preaching the crusade against Mongols and the necessity to defend its Eastern border. Within an ever-flourishing idea of a territorial Christendom, kingdoms on its boundaries claimed a central place in the Christian mental geography, which they used to strengthen royal power and to conquer new territories.¹ Defending the frontier of Christendom was closely connected to the crusade, an instrument of the papacy *par excellence*. Poland and Hungary submitted to the pope's authority, gaining his protection and support in their internal conflicts, and this papal support was a key factor toward the process of strengthening central authority. In turn, the papacy used these local political ambitions to support missionary activity in the East and to counterbalance the increased influence of the Roman-German Empire, which would have endangered its authority. In a study dedicated to medieval Hungary, Nora Berend has shown that Hungary developed its own frontier ideology in the thirteenth century, centering on the claim that the kingdom was essential to the defense of Christendom. This ideology culminated in the concept of Hungary as "bulwark of Christendom" during the Ottoman wars of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the frontier became highly militarised. In addition to this, the concept of Hungary as frontier society calls attention to the importance of distinguishing between the varied statuses of frontiers as realities and concepts.² For the Polish kingdom, Paul W. Knoll remarked the coincidence between the kingdom's Eastern expansion toward the Black Sea and Dniester River and the emergence of the idea that Poland is a frontier of Christendom, a bulwark of Christianity against the infidels' threat.³

1 Nora Berend, "Défense de la Chrétienté et naissance d'une identité: Hongrie, Pologne et péninsule Ibérique au Moyen Âge", *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 58 (2003), 5: 1009–1027.

2 Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims and "Pagans" in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c.1300*, (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 270–271.

3 Paul W. Knoll, "Poland as *Antemurale Christianitatis* in the Late Middle Ages", *The Catholic Historical Review*, 60 (1974), 3: 381–401; see also Wiktor Weintraub, "Renaissance Poland and *Antemurale Christianitatis*", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 3–4 (1979–1980), 2: 920–930 who

Behind such rhetorical statements concerning the defense of Christendom lay various political objectives, which sometimes diverged from those claims. An important objective for both kingdoms was the annexation of the provinces Halych and Vladimir and the control over the northern Black Sea territories, which was an area of interest because of the Genoese merchants' intense commercial activity. In the mid-fourteenth century, Hungary and Poland were in full expansion, Louis of Anjou and Casimir the Great's reign being characterised by a strengthening of the royal power and by territorial gains. Both kings added to their titles rule over "Halych and Vladimir,"⁴ and the conflicts from within the Golden Horde favored the Eastern expansion of the two kingdoms. Nevertheless, the Tartars received the hardest blow from the Lithuanians. In 1362, *knyaz* Olgierd won a great victory against the Tartars in the Battle of *Sinie Vodi* (Blue Waters), when the Tartars were repelled across to the Dnieper. Starting with 1340, King Casimir initiated many campaigns to recover Halych, facing the Lithuanians and the Tartars who also claimed these territories.⁵ Meanwhile, Hungary's actions for this purpose resulted in the creation of a new province at the east of the Carpathians, later named Moldavia, whose rule was entrusted to voievode Dragoș from Maramureș. The restoration, at King Louis's request, of the Cuman Episcopate, destroyed after the Tartar invasion in 1241, was also connected to Hungary's expansion eastward,⁶ but the changes in the king's oriental policy put an end to these endeavours. In 1350, the kings of Hungary and Poland signed a treaty which stipulated that Louis gave up his rights over Halych in his uncle's Casimir's favor, who, lacking direct successors, designated him heir to the throne of Poland.⁷ Twenty years later, Louis became the king of Poland, thus finally annexing Halych to Hungary, a fact which increased the Polish nobles' gloomy view of the new king.

Meanwhile, Hungary lost control of Moldavia. In 1363, a rebel nobleman, voievod Bogdan of Cuhea, entered "stealthily" in Moldavia, banishing Dragoș's

underlines that Renaissance Poland "was quite reluctant to assume the part of *antemurale* that the West tried to assign it."; Paul Srodecki, "Antemurale Christianitatis", *Religiöse Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa. Konstitution und Konkurrenz im nationen- und epochenübergreifenden Zugriff*, ed. by Joachim Bahlcke, Stefan Rohdewald, Thomas Wünsch, (Berlin, 2013), 804–822 (805–810 for the case of Poland).

4 Jozef Sieradzki, *Polska w wieku XIV*, (Warsaw, 1959), 16–18.

5 H. Paszkiewicz, *Polityka ruska Kazimierza Wielkiego*, (Warsaw, 1925).

6 G. I. Brătianu, "Les rois de Hongrie et les Principautés Roumaines au XIV^e siècle", *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique*, xxviii (1947): 79.

7 Oscar Halecki, *Dzieje unii Jagiellonskiej*, I, (Krakow, 1919), 65–66.

successors.⁸ In 1370, Moldavia was recognised as legitimate political entity within Christendom, independent of the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland.⁹ Following prince Lațcu's pro-Catholic policy, Pope Urban v decided to erect a bishopric see in Siret, subordinated directly to the Holy See, and placed the Duchy of Moldavia under Apostolic protection. The mention of the fight against "the enemies of the cross" bestowed upon Moldavia the position of frontier-state and explains its special statute.¹⁰ This change in status did not fend off the Hungarian king's claims to Moldavia. In 1372, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV, promised Louis not to usurp and to reclaim the kingdoms of Hungary, Poland, Dalmatia, and the principality of Moldavia. We can see in the mention of the latter a response of the Hungarian king to the actions which threatened his interests in Moldavia.¹¹

The negotiations between Charles IV and Louis took place in the context of the call for a crusade made by Pope Gregory XI, concerned by the swift military success of the Ottomans in the Balkans. After John v Palaiologos' acceptance of the union with Rome, the pope pleaded for military aid to Byzantium and for stopping the conflicts between Christian powers.¹² The reconciliation between Louis of Anjou and Charles IV was crucial as both sovereigns manifested their support for the crusade. In 1364, the two kings participated at the congress of Krakow,¹³ where they discussed the organization of a large crusade, an idea which was fervently backed up by Peter I of Lusignan, the king of Cyprus, who still hoped to recover Jerusalem and travelled all across Europe to call forth the other Christian monarchs to join him.¹⁴ Louis of Anjou was

8 The chronology of the event is a topic of controversy see Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate*, (Iași, 1997), 91.

9 Șerban Papacostea, *Geneza statului în Evul Mediu românesc*, (Cluj-Napoca, 1988), 128.

10 Liviu Pilat, "Sfântul Scaun și întemeierea Moldovei", *Revista Istorică*, XIX (2008), 1–2: 29–48.

11 Jan Sykora, "Poziția internațională a Moldovei în timpul lui Lațcu", *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, 29 (1976), 8: 1135–1151.

12 For John v visit to Rome see Oscar Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance à Rome. Vingt ans de travail pour l'union des Eglises et pour la défense de l'Empire d'Orient 1355–1375*, (Warsaw, 1930); for the projects of crusade Anthony Luttrell, "Gregory XI and the Turks: 1370–1378", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, XLVI (1980): 393–394.

13 Roman Grodecki, *Kongres Krakowski w roku 1364*, (Warsaw, 1939).

14 N. Iorga, *Philippe de Mézières (1327–1405) et la croisade au XIV^e siècle*, (Paris, 1896), 144–202. For King Peter's tour along Western Europe and the reactions toward his project for a Crusade see also Frederick J. Boehlke, *Pierre de Thomas. Scholar, Diplomat and Crusader*, (Philadelphia, 1966), 206–207. For the congress of Krakow see Malgorzata Dabrowska, "Peter of Cyprus and Casimir the Great in Cracow", *Byzantiaka*, 14 (1994): 257–267.

already known as an enthusiastic crusader and, in 1366, the pope introduced him to the Byzantine emperor as one of the crusade leaders, along with Peter I of Lusignian and Amedeo of Savoy. The Hungarian king did not deliver the results expected of him.¹⁵ The visit of Emperor John V Paleologus in Buda failed to obtain Hungary's military support for the Byzantine Empire.¹⁶ While the negotiations between Louis and Venice started in 1356 and continued until 1366, aiming at a crusade against the Turks, they had no success despite the Republic's eagerness to support Louis of Anjou's army with two to five galleys for six months.¹⁷

In 1372, Pope Gregory XI sent the Patriarch of Alexandria to mediate the reconciliation between Louis of Anjou and Charles IV. The two monarchs swore before him, hands on the Gospel and the cross, not to claim each other's realms.¹⁸ In the following year, King Louis suggested to the pope a crusade against the Turks and the Tartars who threatened Hungary's frontiers, but later on he changed his mind.¹⁹

In 1377, Louis of Anjou started an expedition eastward against the Lithuanians, trying to take advantage of *knyaz* Olgierd's death. In that year, several Lithuanian dukes swore an oath of allegiance to the king of Hungary. Among them were the Koriat brothers, who possessed Podolia.²⁰ Louis thus managed to secure a safe territorial connection between the two great maritime commercial areas, the Baltic and the Black Sea. The territory under his control connected the Hansa to the Italian colonies in Crimea.²¹ In November 1380, the city of Lwow received trading privileges from Louis of Anjou on *via Tartarica*²²

15 Norman Housley, "The King Louis the Great of Hungary and the Crusades, 1342–1382", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 62 (1984), 2: 202–206.

16 Joseph Gill, "John V Palaeologus at the court of Louis I of Hungary (1366)", *Byzantinoslavica*, 38 (1977), 1: 31–38; see also Francisc Pall, "Encore une fois sur le voyage diplomatique de Jean V Paléologue en 1365–1366", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 9 (1971), 3: 535–540.

17 For these negotiations and the causes of their failure see the previous chapter; also Ovidiu Cristea, "Venice the Balkan policy of Hungary and the rise of the Ottoman empire", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, 40 (2002), 1–4: 179–194.

18 Gelasius Dobner (ed.), *Monumenta Historica Bohemiae*, II, (Prague, 1768), 386–387.

19 Halecki, *Un empereur de Byzance à Rome*, 266–270.

20 Oscar Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou and the Rise of East Central Europe*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 60–61.

21 Marian Malowist, "The Baltic and the Black Sea in Medieval Trade", *Baltic and Scandinavian Countries*, 5 (1937): 38–40.

22 Franciszek Piekosinski (ed.), *Kodecs dyplomatyczny miasta Krakowa, 1257–1506*, I, (Krakow, 1879), 72–73.

as part of the expansion of the Hungarian-Polish union toward the Black Sea. In 1382, Louis of Anjou died and left both crowns to his daughter Mary, with the intention to continue the dynastic union between Hungary and Poland.²³ Louis' will was disregarded, and the Polish and Hungarian nobles looked independently for a solution to the dynastic crisis. Louis of Anjou's inheritance was claimed by both kingdoms, and a fierce rivalry between Poland and Hungary ensued in the following years.

After refusing to give the crown of Poland to Mary, the Polish nobles directed their attention towards Jadwiga, Louis of Anjou's youngest daughter, whom they married to the Lithuanian duke Jagiello, Olgierd's son, known as Wladislas after his Christening. The Hungarian-Polish union was thereby replaced by the Polish-Lithuanian union. The union from Krewo of August 1385,²⁴ which was in fact a political contract resulting from the matrimonial alliance, marked the emergence of a powerful force in Eastern Europe. Stretching from Baltic Sea to Black Sea, it was a political structure remarkable for its diversity.²⁵ At its beginnings, the Polish-Lithuanian union was not truly effective and evolved during the next two centuries, for neither the Polish nor the Lithuanians could comprehend such a political entity at the end of the fourteenth century. Only a small part of the territories belonging to the Russian-Lithuanian state entered into the structure of the Polish realm. In fact, Jagiello could only incorporate into Poland the territories which belonged to his personal patrimony and were governed by his representatives. The part of Jagiello's state remained in direct homage to the ruler and only thus became a part of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland. This feature of the union requires a rethinking of how it is understood by historians: Jagiello had promised to annex the territories of Lithuania and Russia not to Poland, but to the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland.²⁶

The Polish-Lithuanian union was not received enthusiastically all across the territories between the Baltic and the Black Sea. In the Baltic area, the Teutonic Order displayed its adversity, given the fact that Lithuania's conversion to Christianity relieved the order of the mission for which it had been brought there, namely the crusade against pagans. The Teutonic Knights took

23 Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*, (London: Tauris, 2001), 170.

24 The act of union was a matter of controversy and some historians denied its authenticity. For more details see Robert Frost, *The Oxford History of Poland-Lithuania Union*, 1 (Oxford University Press, 2015), 47–57.

25 Halecki, *Dzieje unii Jagiellonkiej*, 1, 113–133.

26 Jan Dabrowski, "Corona Regni Poloniae au XIV^e siècle", *Bulletin International de l'Academie Polonaise*, 7, Krakow, 1953: 59–61.

the side of Witold, Jagiello's cousin.²⁷ The conflict ended in 1392 with the treaty of Ostrow, where Witold became governor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in King Wladislas's name.²⁸ In the Black Sea region Hungarian influence persisted and, after Louis of Anjou's death, a stronger assertion of Moldavia and Podolia became visible owing to cooperation between their rulers. For the year 1386, the Russian chronicles mention the flight of *knyaz* Basil, Dmitri Donskoi's son, from the Tartars and his refuge in Podolia and Moldavia.²⁹ In the same year, two Genoese emissaries went to "Constantine and Prince Peter" because of the war with the Tartars.³⁰ If we consider both points, we can conclude that the two emissaries were Prince Peter of Moldavia and the *knyaz* of Podolia, Constantine Koriatovich.³¹ The closeness between Moldavia and Podolia can be explained by a matrimonial alliance,³² which favored Moldavia's territorial extension toward south-east and an increased control over Akkerman.³³ As duke of Podolia, Constantine Koriatovich granted Krakow a commercial privilege in April 1385,³⁴ but this gesture does not point to an option for Polish-Lithuanian union. There is evidence that between 1382–1394 Podolia remained a Hungarian fief, a fact which was illustrated by the request to establish a Catholic bishopric at Kamenets-Podolsky, in close connection with the Catholic hierarchy of the Hungarian kingdom. Moreover, the Koriat brothers did not feature in the many acts of homage of the Lithuanian dukes to the new king of Poland.³⁵

27 Witold took refuge twice to the Teutonic Knights see Giedrė Mickūnaitė, *Making a great ruler: Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania*, (Budapest-New York, 2006), 19–20 and 21–23.

28 Halecki, *Dzieje unii Jagiellonskiej*, I, 134–139.

29 *Полное собрание русских летописей*, XXXIV, (Moscow, 1978), 135.

30 Papacostea, *Geneza statului în Evul Mediu românesc*, 99.

31 For a different point of view see Papacostea, *Geneza statului în Evul Mediu românesc*, 97–113 who argued that Constantin should be identified with a Moldavian prince. The hypotheses was rejected by Ștefan Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 116.

32 Constantine Koriatovich's sister, Anastasia, was identified as wife of Peter's brother, Roman I (Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei*, 136–137; Frost, *Poland-Lithuania Union*, 23).

33 Matei Cazacu, "A propos de l'expansion polono-lithuanienne au nord de la mer Noire aux XIV^e–XV^e siècles: Czarnigrad, la « Cité Noire » de l'embouchure du Danube" in *Passé turco-tatar. Présent soviétique. Etudes offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*, ed. Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, Giles Veinstein, S. E. Wimbush, (Louvain-Paris, 1986), 99–122.

34 Piekosinski, *Kodecs dyplomatyczny miasta Krakowa*, I, 74–75.

35 Janusz Kurtyka, "Podolia: the « Rotating Borderland » at the Crossroads of Civilisations in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period", *On the Frontier of Latin Europe. Integration and Segregation in Red Ruthenia, 1350–1600*, ed. Thomas Wünsch, Andrzej Janeczek, (Warsaw, 2004), 138.

The situation is different in Moldavia's case. Shortly after the Polish-Lithuanian armies reconquered Halych, Prince Peter arrived at Lwow in September 1387 and gave an oath of allegiance to King Wladislas and the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland. The ceremonial involved "kissing the cross," which was specific to Russian-Lithuanian rituals, and the proceedings took place before the Cyprian metropolitan of Kiev and not in the presence of the Catholic bishop.³⁶ At the same time Moldavia's Catholic bishop left his see to become the first bishop of Vilna,³⁷ while the prince of Moldavia chose the Greek-Orthodox faith. A suffragan bishopric of Asprokastron, subordinated to the Metropolitan See of Halych and located by the patriarchal lists at the mouth of Dnieper,³⁸ was upgraded by the Byzantine emperor to the position of Metropolitan See of Moldavia,³⁹ arousing the discontent of the metropolitan of Kiev and of all Russia. In this way, Moldavia radically changed its previous status and was integrated into the Polish-Lithuanian political union. In the following year, 1388, King Wladislas asked the prince of Moldavia for a loan, using the fortress of Halych in guarantee.⁴⁰ Also, through the mediation of the Moldavian prince, Poland extended its influence over Wallachia by concluding a treaty with prince Mircea against Hungary.⁴¹

Despite their different political and religious orientation, relations between Moldavia and Podolia remained close. On the occasion of the Lithuanian-Polish intervention in Podolia, Teodor Koriatovich received help from the Hungarians and Moldavians.⁴² Defeated, he retreated to Hungary, where Sigismund of Luxembourg granted him the castle of Munkacs with its surrounding territory. Podolia was divided between the king of Poland and the grand duke of Lithuania. The consequences of Koriatovich's defeat were dire for the prince of Moldavia as well. Prince Roman lost his throne and was replaced by his brother, Stephen I, who was a lot more compliant to Witold and Wladislas. In

36 Liviu Pilat, "The Vassal Homage of Moldavian Ruler to the King of Poland: Ritual and symbols (1387–1415)", *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe*, 1 (2009): 63–72.

37 Lucas Waddingus, *Annales minorum seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, IX, (Quaracchi, 1932), 85.

38 Jean Darrouzès (ed.), *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, (Paris, 1981), 403.

39 Ștefan S. Gorovei, "Aux débuts des rapports moldo-byzantins", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXIV (1985), 3: 195–199.

40 Mihai Costăchescu (ed.), *Documente moldovenești înainte de Ștefan cel Mare*, II, (Iași, 1932), 605.

41 P. P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, (Bucharest, 1944), 231–233.

42 *Полное собрание русских летописей*, XVII, (St. Petersburg, 1907), 82–83.

the act of homage from January 1395, Stephen I pledged to grant his sovereign help against any of his enemies: the king of Hungary, the prince of Wallachia, the Turks, the Tartars, and the Teutonic Knights.⁴³ The main adversary was the king of Hungary who was preparing a campaign against the new Moldavian prince. In January-February 1395, the Hungarian army commanded by the king himself entered Moldavia but, after the defeat from Ghindăoani, was forced to retreat.⁴⁴ After their victory, the Moldavians retaliated,⁴⁵ in close connection with king Wladislas's attempt to claim in Jadwiga's name the crown of Hungary, after Queen Mary's death.⁴⁶

The Hungarian kingdom's troubles were far too numerous to allow for an action focused on reclaiming Moldavia and Podolia. After Louis of Anjou's disappearance, a political concept, similar to the Polish one, appeared in Hungary: the Holy Crown of Hungary became the personification of the kingdom, much more significant than the person of the king.⁴⁷ Owing to this concept, Sigismund of Luxembourg became king because he was elected by the nobles and not on hereditary grounds, but this development led to a decrease of the royal power in its relationship with the nobility. The political crisis continued after 1387, the year of Sigismund of Luxemburg's coronation, climaxing with the king's arrest by the nobles in 1401. Eventually Sigismund emerged victoriously and consolidated his power to the detriment of the great barons in 1403.⁴⁸

Ottoman Threat, Christian Solidarity and Political Rivalry

After 1389, Hungary experienced the Ottoman threat directly. The king's efforts in this direction targeted the restoration of sovereignty over Serbia and the organization of a crusade to crush the Turks for good.⁴⁹ The situation worsened after Sultan Bayezid I's campaign in Wallachia in 1394. Despite a victory

43 Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești*, II, 611–612.

44 Radu Manolescu, "Campania lui Sigismund de Luxemburg în Moldova (1395)", *Analele Universității București. Istorie*, XV (1966): 59–74.

45 Radu Popa, *Țara Maramureșului în veacul al XIV-lea*, second edition, (Bucharest, 1997), 236.

46 Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou*, 220–227.

47 László Péter, "The Holy Crown of Hungary. Visible and Invisible", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 81 (2003), 3: 421–510.

48 Elemér Mályusz, "Zsigmond király központosítási törekvései Magyarországon", *Történelmi Szemle*, 1960, 2–3: 165–173.

49 Pál Engel, "A Török-Magyar háborúk első éve 1389–1392", *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 111 (1998), 3: 12–28.

against the Ottoman army, Prince Mircea was forced to retreat, and the sultan installed Vlad I on the Wallachian throne. The new prince, loyal to the Ottomans, declared his allegiance to King Wladislas Jagiello, considering that Queen Jadwiga was the legitimate heiress of Louis of Anjou.⁵⁰ In his foreign policy, Prince Vlad tried to combine the Ottoman and Polish interests to the detriment of Hungary, whilst internally he was supported by a pro-Ottoman faction of the nobility that was alarmed both by the Hungarian pressure and by the menace of Catholicism.⁵¹ The loss of Wallachia determined a series of military actions to bring back Prince Mircea on the throne. King Sigismund gave up the idea of bringing Moldavia into the crusade, focusing upon the line of the Danube in order to prevent Wallachia from becoming a springboard for the Ottomans. In April 1395, Stephen of Losoncz entered Wallachia with his army, but he was defeated and died in battle. The royal expedition obtained further important results, but it came to a sudden halt when the news of Queen Mary's death reached Sigismund. During the retreat, the king's army was attacked by Prince Vlad's army while crossing the Carpathians.⁵²

Simultaneously, with the fights waged in Wallachia, Bayezid I began the siege of Constantinople and negotiated an alliance with Timur against the Khan Toqtamış, which indicates an orientation of the Ottoman expansion toward the mouth of the Danube and north-east of the Black Sea.⁵³ The initiative belonged to Timur Lenk, who, under the pretext of a secret agreement between Toqtamış and the Christians, suggested to Bayezid to embrace a holy war against the unfaithful.⁵⁴

The disruption of trade with Asia and the spectacular Ottoman ascension created anxiety within the Christian world. Despite the Great Schism of the Western Church and the divergences between the Christian rulers, in 1396 the great Christian offensive with the purpose to banish the Ottomans from Europe was ready. However, the underestimation of the enemy and the use of inferior military tactics proved to be decisive to the outcome of the confrontation: on 25 September 1396, at Nicopolis, the crusader expedition ended in a disaster for

50 Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, 259–261.

51 Octavian Iliescu, "Vlad I^{er}, voyevode de Valachie: le règne, le sceau et le monnaies", *Revue Roumaine d' Histoire*, XXVII (1988), 1–2: 100–102.

52 Gustav Gündisch, "Die Türkeneinfälle in Siebenbürgen bis zur mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, II (1937), 3: 394–396; Victor Motogna, "Luptele lui Sigismund și Mircea cel Bătrân cu turcii, în 1395", *Revista Istorică*, XI (1925), 10–12: 281–287.

53 Tahsin Gemil, "Mircea l'Ancien face à la politique impériale de Bayezid I^{er}", *Revue Roumaine d' Histoire*, XXV (1986), 1–2: 15–17.

54 Nagy Pienaru, "Timurizii și Marea Neagră", *Marea Neagră. Puteri maritime—puteri terestre*, ed. Ovidiu Cristea, (Bucharest, 2006), 165.

the Christian army. Sigismund of Luxembourg fled with a ship, sailing to Kilia and from there to Constantinople. Sigismund's voyage provided a good opportunity to realise the significance of control over the mouth of the Danube and the northwest Black Sea territories.⁵⁵ Such measures confirm the opinion that the king learned valuable lessons from the defeat and that he tried to find new ways for countering the Ottoman threat.⁵⁶ This new policy is mirrored by a letter sent to the Grand Master of Hospitallers few weeks after the catastrophe⁵⁷ and by the counter offensive launched in Wallachia. Shortly after the defeat at Nicopolis the voivode of Transylvania, Scibor of Sciborzyc Ostojczyk, attacked Prince Vlad. Scibor took Vlad prisoner and surrendered him to King Sigismund upon his return into the kingdom.⁵⁸ The return of Mircea the Elder to the throne of Wallachia was a success for the Hungarian king as Sigismund won a precious ally for future confrontations with the Ottomans.

The idea of defending Christendom against the Ottoman threat also became an issue for Hungarian-Polish relations, dominated until then by the dispute for Louis of Anjou's inheritance. In July 1397, Sigismund of Luxembourg and Wladislas Jagiello met at Stara Wies, with the aim of concluding peace

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- 55 See the document published by Sime Ljubić (ed.), *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, IV, (Zagreb, 1874), 399. According to the text Venice acknowledge the measures undertaken by king Sigismund of Hungary on the road to Constantinopolis after the defeat of Nicopolis (1396). "Ad aliam partem dictae suae ambasiatae, in qua narrant distincte et seriose provisiones factas per ipsum serenissimum dominum regem in Licostomo, Chaliachera et in Constantinopoli sic dicimus, quod per illas et alias ... comprehendi et videri potest satis clare virtus et bona intentio et disputatio maiestatis sue circha ista facta." For the role of Licostomo and Caliacra in the Hungarian project of crusade see Șerban Papacostea, "Kilia et la politique orientale de Sigismond de Luxembourg", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 15 (1976), 3: 421–436; Șerban Papacostea, "Genovezii la Caliacra: un document ignorat", *Pontica*, 30 (1997): 277–283; see also for a later period Francisc Pall, "Byzance à la veille de sa chute et Janco de Hunedoara (Hunyadi)", *Byzantinoslavica*, 30 (1969), 1: 119–126.
- 56 See Mark Whelan, "Catastrophe or Consolidation? Sigismund's Response to defeat after the crusade of Nicopolis (1396)" in *Between Worlds. The Age of the Jagiellonians*, ed. by Florin Ardelean, Christopher Nicholson and Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 215–227.
- 57 Last edition in John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 482–485. John W. Barker pointed out the importance of this letter almost ignored by the scholars as it underlined Sigismund's determination to continue the fight and to find new allies. The king spoke about the defense of Constantinople and about a naval league with the Genoese, the Hospitallers and the Byzantines.
- 58 Gusztáv Wencel, *Stibor Vajda. Életrajzi tanulmány*, (Budapest, 1874), 100–101.

and collaborating against the Ottomans.⁵⁹ Although defeated at Nicopolis and contested by part of the Hungarian nobility, Sigismund of Luxembourg negotiated powerfully; he was unwilling to release any of the rights of the Hungarian Crown in favor of the regions east of the Carpathians. The terms for the treaty put forward by the king of Hungary stipulated that Wladislas Jagiello was to keep Halych only during his lifetime, and the province was to be returned to Hungary after Wladislas' death. In exchange, Wladislas was to hand back to Hungary, on his own efforts and expense, Moldavia and Podolia. Regarding the Ottoman threat, Wladislas Jagiello and Witold were to participate in the defense of Christendom with all their troops and at their own expenses, with the obligation to participate personally should the expedition be led by the king of Hungary. In turn, Sigismund promised to offer military support to both of them against the White Russians and the Tartars.⁶⁰ The final stipulations would have particularly interested Witold, who probably was neither present nor represented at the conference, since in 1397 he started his first expedition in the direction of Volga and Crimea. Moreover, by placing the grand duke of Lithuania next to the king of Poland as an equal partner, Sigismund of Luxembourg made a first attempt to discover whether he could play one against the other. His promise to offer military support even against remote Muscovy could not be taken seriously, no more than the personal participation of Witold in a Balkan war.⁶¹

Witold's expedition in the East did not fit into the logic of the crusade, it being inspired rather by the political realities from the northern Black Sea region. The great Duke of Lithuania allied with Toqtamışh against Timur Qutlugh, acting to restore the former khan of the Golden Horde. The alliance

59 J. Skrzypek, *Południowo-wschodnia polityka Polski od koronacji Jagiełły do śmierci Jadwigi i bitwy nad Worsklą, 1386–1399*, (Lwów, 1936), 92–93; Zenon Nowak, *Polityka polnocna Zygmunta Luksenburskiego do roku 1411*, (Toruń, 1964), 66–67.

60 “Et quia permittente de iudicio Turcorum rabiem ad devastationem christianitatis apertis faucibus attemptantium comprimere ipsoque sumpmo deo nobis auxiliante affectamus, ex eoque nos oportet, quod sepius contra eosdem cum manu forti proficisci, ideo prefati domini Wladislaus rex et Wytoldus dux ambo personaliter vel saltem eorum unus cum amborum tota et maiori, qua possunt, potentia in eorum expensis et sumptibus propriis, nobiscum venire et proficisci tenebuntur et debebit in obsequium defensionis christianitatis, si ingruerint, pugnaturi et hic victoriam adepturi ac in futurum premium vite eterne feliciter percepturi etc., quod si fecerint et ad effectum deduxerint, optatum nos e converso in ipsorum dominorum regis et ducis subsidium contra albos Ruthenos aut Tartaros exacta nostra potentia cum omni diligentia solempniter procedemus” (Elemér Mályusz (ed.), *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár, I* (1387–1399), (Budapest, 1951), 537.

61 Halecki, *Jadwiga of Anjou*, 238–239.

between the two was strengthened by a *yarlik*, whereby the Golden Horde's khan confirmed Witold's domination over Podolia and the territories from southern Russia.⁶² In 1397 and 1398, Witold and Toqtamish organised military expeditions north of the Black Sea, reaching all the way up to Crimea.⁶³ These actions can be appraised from the perspective of Witold's political ambitions who went as far as to proclaim himself king of Lithuania,⁶⁴ but they can also be seen as part of a larger chain of events, which include anti-Ottoman crusade plans, and a project for a religious union. King Wladislas, along with Cyprian, the metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia, proposed the summoning of an ecumenical synod to discuss the question of the union between the Catholics and the Greek-Orthodox as well as the project to support Byzantium against the Ottoman threat. Both counted on their influence in Constantinople, and were convinced that the patriarch and the emperor would accept their proposals, given the fact that the Ottoman expansion aroused an ever growing concern within the Byzantine capital.⁶⁵ The idea of organizing an ecumenical synod in Russia came in the context created by metropolitan Cyprian's attempt to subordinate the metropolitan seats of Halych and Moldavia, supported by the Ecumenical Patriarchy, which created a strained situation in the region.⁶⁶

In 1397, archbishop Michael of Bethlehem was sent to Poland to smooth away the conflict, and this mission presented the occasion to voice the Byzantine point of view on the matter.⁶⁷ In the letter addressed to Wladislas Jagiello, the Patriarch of Constantinople praised the king and the metropolitan Cyprian's initiative concerning the union of the Churches and asked him to conclude an alliance with the king of Hungary, for the purposes of waging a war together against the infidels. In the letter addressed to the metropolitan of Kiev, the patriarch approached reticently the issue of the religious union, showing that a synod could not take place whilst the Ottomans were besieging Constantinople; moreover, he denied the metropolitan's request concerning

62 A. Prochaska, "Z Witoldowych dziejów", *Przegląd Historyczny*, 15 (1912), 3: 259–270.

63 Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania. International diplomacy of European periphery (15th–18th century)*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011), 7–8.

64 Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler*, 65.

65 Maciej Salamon, "Cyprian (Kyprianos, Kiprian) the Metropolitan of Kiev and Byzantine Policy in East-Central Europe", *Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia*, 111, (Krakow, 2001), 231.

66 John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century*, (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 250–254.

67 Dimitri Obolensky, "A Late Fourteenth-Century Byzantine Diplomat: Michael, Archbishop of Bethlehem", *Byzance et les Slaves. Mélanges Ivan Dujcev*, ed. S. Dufrenne, (Paris, 1979), 299–315.

Moldavia and Halych.⁶⁸ As long as the Polish kingdom had large provinces with a Greek-Orthodox population which could not be brought by conversion towards the Roman Church, the religious union was an important matter for the cohesion of the Polish-Lithuanian union. Historians therefore argue that the authors of the project envisaged first of all a regional union and not reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople.⁶⁹

The Holy See was informed about King Wladislas's intentions and, in May 1399, Pope Boniface IX authorised the bishop of Krakow to preach the crusade in the Kingdom of Poland and the duchies of Lithuania, Russia, Podolia and Moldavia, all vassals to the king, for the king desired to fight against the "Tartars, pagans, Turks and other barbarian nations."⁷⁰ The order in which the enemies of the Christian faith were listed shows that Tartars were the main target of the crusade, and not the Ottomans. The order of the enumeration can also reflect the turmoil which appeared north of the Black Sea. Timur Lenk's ambition to band under his command the Muslim forces, including the Ottoman emirate, represented a threat which was greater than Ottoman expansion. Moreover, the Emir Aktav and his numerous clans left the Golden Horde's territory and sought refuge in Ottoman lands. Bayezid settled them in the Western area of the Black Sea and used their military abilities to strengthen Ottoman domination in the region.⁷¹

The papal reference to the Ottomans as enemies of the Polish king is a consequence of the talks in Stara Wies from 1397. In March 1399, Pope Boniface IX decided that the crusade against the Turks be preached in the realm of Hungary, because the Ottomans were threatening to conquer Constantinople and to invade Wallachia and the Kingdom of Hungary.⁷² The pope's concerns were

68 Fr. Miklosich and Ioseph Müller (eds.), *Acta Patriarchatus Constantinopolitani MCCCXV–MCCCII*, II, (Viena, 1862), 280–285.

69 Oscar Halecki, "Rome et Byzance au temps du Grand Schisme d'Occident", *Collectanea Theologica*, 18 (1937): 528.

70 A. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, I, (Rome, 1860), 769–771.

71 Aurel Decei, "Établissement de Aktav de la Horde d' Or dans l'Empire Ottoman, au temps de Yildirim Bayezid", *Zeki Velidi Togan' a Armağan. Symbolae in honorem Z. V. Togan*, (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1955), 77–92; but see the different opinion of Nagy Pienaru, "Românii și tătarii. Relațiile Țării Românești cu Hoarda de Aur în vremea lui Mircea cel Bătrân", *Vocația istoriei. Prinos profesorului Șerban Papacostea*, eds. Ovidiu Cristea and Gheorghe Lazăr, (Brăila, 2008), 297–330, who analyses the episode of Aktav's migration based on a wide range of oriental chronicles. In his opinion, Aktav left his Crimean territory sometimes around 1395 as a result of Timur Lenk expedition north of the Black Sea and settled in Rumelia around Filibe (Plovdiv).

72 A. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta Hungariae*, II, (Rome, 1860), 170–172.

raised by rumors of a new Ottoman campaign north of Danube, in 1398, which did not take place.⁷³ On 23 March 1399, Sigismund of Luxemburg asked the Hungarian noblemen to prepare themselves to face a new Ottoman expedition. According to the information received from Prince Mircea of Wallachia on the previous day, the sultan was in Adrianople along with his army with the intention to head towards the Danube. The king declared that helping Wallachia was crucial and that he was going to lead the expedition personally.⁷⁴

The Ottoman threat was not a priority for the Polish kingdom. On the contrary, there was a convergence between Polish and Ottoman interests, prompting certain scholars to suggest possible agreement between Bayezid I and Wladislas Jagiello,⁷⁵ but there is no evidence in this respect. The temptation of controlling territories north of the Black Sea and the increased influence of Timur Lenk in the region were more important issues for the Polish-Lithuanian union. As a result of his military preparations, Witold was portrayed as a crusader who fought against the Ottomans. A British chronicle attributed a victory against one of Bayezid's sons to the king of Lithuania, a recent convert to Christianity. As a sign of their new faith, Lithuanians put on white mantles with red crosses over their armors, a gesture interpreted as a fulfilment of Philip de Mèzières' crusading plan against the Ottomans. According to this plan, the Lithuanian ruler would join the Teutonic Order in an expedition towards Constantinople.⁷⁶ But the reality was rather different as Witold's army, which included Lithuanians, Poles, Teutonic Knights, Moldavians and Tartars, was crushed by Timur Qutlug on River Vorskla (12 August 1399). Witold's army suffered heavy losses. Many Lithuanian nobles fell on the battlefield⁷⁷ along with some important members of the Polish nobility such as the palatine of Podolia, Spitko of Melsztyna⁷⁸ and, highly probable, Prince Stephen I of Moldavia.⁷⁹

An important consequence of the defeat was that it cut short Lithuania's expansion eastward, losing control over the northern Black Sea area. In Moldavia, Prince Iuga, Stephen I's successor, was removed and replaced with Prince Alexander by Mircea, Lord of Wallachia. This action brought Moldavia

73 Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, 274–275.

74 Mályusz, *Zsigmondokori oklevéltár*, I, 637–638.

75 Skrzypek, *Południowo-wschodnia polityka Polski*, 82.

76 Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler*, 38–39.

77 *Полное собрание русских летоуцеѣ*, VIII, (St. Petersburg, 1859), 73; Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen and Ernst Strehle (eds.), *Scriptores rerum Prusicarum*, III, (Leipzig, 1866), 230.

78 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 157–158.

79 Dennis Deletant, "Moldavia between Hungary and Poland, 1347–1412", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 64 (1986), 2: 205.

under the influence of the Hungarian king and aroused Witold's dissatisfaction who, in March 1400, supported a new candidate to the throne of Moldavia. In the context created by Jadwiga's death and the defeat of Vorskla, a military intervention was abandoned in favor of diplomatic negotiations.⁸⁰ The situation returned to normal in 1402, when the emissary of the new Moldavian prince promised that his lord would pay soon an oath to the king of Poland.⁸¹

Neither the king of Hungary, nor the Wallachian prince had the military might to strengthen control over the northern Black Sea area, given the fact that a new Ottoman attack seemed imminent. On 27 May 1400, Pope Boniface IX sent a circular letter addressed to the Catholic clergy, asserting that the discord between the Christians encouraged Sultan Bayezid to attack Constantinople, Wallachia and the kingdom of Hungary. The pope ordered the preaching of the crusade for two years and expressed his hope about Christians' unity.⁸² The Ottoman expedition was a failure. On 3 March 1401, a report of Hemanuel Calogeniti mentioned that the Ottomans were attacked in Wallachia, by Hungarian troops and by Prince Mircea's army, and suffered heavy losses.⁸³ However, the most powerful strike for the Ottomans came from the east. First, a comet was seen on the sky and it was considered the sign which predicted the Ottomans' disaster.⁸⁴ Then, 1401, a Franciscan monk and a "Saracene," advised the Byzantine emperor and the Genoese from Pera not to conclude peace with the sultan, because Timur Lenk was to come with a powerful army against

80 Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, 277–278; Ilie Minea, *Principatele române și politica orientală a împăratului Sigismund*, (Bucharest, 1919), 97–99.

81 Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești*, II, 623.

82 N. Iorga (ed.), *Notes et extraits pour servir a l'histoire de croisade au XV^e siècle*, II, (Paris, 1899), 81.

83 "... quod in mense Novembris nuper elapsi iste fuit in partibus Thesalonicensibus et vidit gentes Turchorum que revertebantur de partibus Ungarie, ad quas irevant pro depredando; a quibus Turchis audivit iste qualiter LXVI^m Turchorum irevant ad partes Ungarie pro depredando et derobaverant multas et innumeras gentes et cum depredatione predicta redierunt ad partes Vlachie suppositas Turcho, et ibi voluit capitaneus exercitus accipere pendamerium, scilicet de quibuslibet quinque captivis unum, secundum morem suum et, dum sic forent in dictis partibus Vlachie, venit illuc exercitus magnus de Hungaria cum quondam, nomine Milco Vlacho, et conflegit dictos Turchos taliter quod Turchi fuerunt aliqui capti et aliqui occisi et aliqui sumersi, et non evaserunt nisi circa triamilia Turchorum, qui redierunt ad partes Turchie solum (N. Iorga (ed.), *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria românilor*, III, (Bucharest, 1897), 4–5).

84 "In Quadragesimae principio, stella crinita seu cometes apparuit. Quae candam versus occidentem protendens, per dies quadraginta vel circiter duravit. In illius vero anni aestate, conflictus pergrandis inter Themerlinum Tartarorum et Bayezethem Turcarum Caesar conflictus, captus et occisus est" (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 169).

him.⁸⁵ On 29 July 1402, the Ottomans were crushed in the Battle of Ankara, and Sultan Bayezid's death in captivity marked the collapse of the Ottoman political system.

The Eastern Border in Sigismund of Luxembourg's Plans

The crisis of the Ottoman state was a good opportunity for the Christian states to deal with the Ottoman threat for good, but the Christian princes were facing their own difficulties. The Hungarian nobles decided to arrest Sigismund of Luxembourg, offering the crown to the king of Poland, Wladislas Jagiello, but after his refusal they governed in the name of the Holy Crown of Hungary. Finally, King Sigismund emerged victorious from the political crisis, and in 1405 he began to strengthen his authority in his realm.⁸⁶ During the turmoil in Hungary, the Prince of Wallachia concluded a treaty with King Wladislas Jagiello in 1403.⁸⁷ Although the probability of receiving Polish help in the fight against the Ottomans was minimal, Mircea the Elder continued his anti-Ottoman policy by becoming involved in the conflict between Bayezid's successors.⁸⁸ In 1403, Mircea obtained a victory against the Turks near Silistra⁸⁹ and taking advantage of the Ottoman crisis, just as the other Christian powers, he extended his domination to the Black Sea shores and the mouth of the Danube.⁹⁰ In 1406, the prince of Wallachia and the king of Hungary met at Severin in order to reorganise the anti-Ottoman Danubian front. They were joined by the Serbian despot Stephen Lazarevich who previously had fought on the Ottoman side.⁹¹ The use of buffer-states was an important element in the Hungarian defense

85 N. Iorga, "Documents concernant les Grecs et les affaires d'Orient tirés des registres de notaires de Crète", *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, XIV (1937): 89–90.

86 Mályusz, "Zsigmond király központositási": 169–175.

87 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, I/2, 824.

88 Tahsin Gemil, *Romanians and Ottomans in the 14th–16th Centuries*, (Bucharest, 2000), 120–131.

89 Andrei Pippidi, "Sur une inscription grecque du Silistra", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 24 (1986), 4: 325–331.

90 Şerban Papacostea, "La Valachie et la crise de structure de l'Empire Ottomane (1402–1413)", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXV (1986), 1–2: 23–33; more recently for the Ottoman civil war after the battle of Ankara Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid. Empire Building and representation in the Ottoman civil war of 1402–1413*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007); see also Nevra Necipoglu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins. Politics and Society in the Late Empire*, (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 184–232.

91 Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, 305–307.

policy against the Ottoman threat,⁹² but Sigismund of Luxemburg also made use of his own view toward the Greek-Orthodox Church. The king advanced the idea of a union between the Latin and the Greek Churches, based on the equality between the two confessions. Some of the Orthodox clergy were in favor of such a union.⁹³ The religious union and freeing the Greek-Orthodox Christians from under the Ottoman dominance became significant topics in the subsequent period, despite the disaster of 1396, and King Sigismund played a strong role in promoting the idea that the reconciliation between the Greeks and the Latins was possible.

On 23 October 1408, the Venetian Senate discussed the proposal made by the king of Hungary regarding a common action for the benefit of Christendom. King Sigismund's emissary proposed a common diplomatic mission to mediate the dispute between the pope and the cardinals and to organise a synod on the union of the Church. The diplomat also demanded Venice's naval aid to transport the king's troops from Kilia to Gallipoli.⁹⁴ Sigismund proposed a surprise attack on the fortress which secured the link between Europe and Asia for the Ottomans,⁹⁵ a plan which was probably inspired by his unfortunate journey from Kilia to Constantinople in 1396. Because of its strategic position, Kilia became important for the Hungarian king's policy for the control over the Black Sea's northern region, especially considering that, soon after Sigismund's proposal, the Genoese lost their dominion over Kilia in the Moldavian prince's favor.⁹⁶ The conflict between the Polish-Lithuanian union and the Teutonic Order offered the king of Hungary the opportunity to claim his rights over the Black Sea's north-western region. In 1398, the grand duke Witold gave Samogitia to the Teutonic Order so they would help him in the fight against the

92 Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 231–234; Pál Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire. The Ottomans in Central Europe—A Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390–1566)*, (Budapest, 2015), 51.

93 Șerban Papacostea, *Evul Mediu românesc. Realități politice și curente spirituale*, (Bucharest, 2001), 53–69; Virgil Ciocâltan, “Înțelesul politic al «minunii» sfântului Nicodim de la Tismana”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 22 (2004): 158–166.

94 “item requirit et precatur nos, ut subveniamus ipsi domino regio de aliquibus navigiis grossis pro levando et conducendo a Licostomo contra Galipolim gentes suas armigeras, ad quam fazendam requiret de aliis christianis, ut possit implere intentionem, quam habet in Galipoli” (Sime Ljubić (ed.), *Listine. O odnosajih izmedju juznoga slaventsva i mletacke republike*, v, Zagreb, 1875, 137).

95 Gustav Beckmann, *Der Kampf Kaiser Sigismunds gegen die werdende Weltmacht der Osmanen 1392–1437*, (Gotha, 1902), 11.

96 Șerban Papacostea, *La Mer Noire carrefour des grandes routes intercontinentales 1204–1453*, (Bucharest, 2006), 216–234.

Tartars, but later on he wanted to recover the territory he conceded to them. In 1409, the Teutonic Order concluded an alliance with Sigismund, whereby the knights were pledging to support financially the king's military expedition against Poland, if the Polish king were to receive help from the unfaithful and the schismatic.⁹⁷ The knights were also promising to help the king of Hungary regain Ruthenia, Podolia, Moldavia, and other territories inhabited by the unfaithful, which had been usurped by the king of Poland.⁹⁸ In April 1410, the Order's spies were following the assembly of forces against them and from the gathered information they learned that to the Poles and Lithuanians were to be joined by armies from Muscovy, from the Tartars, from Moldavia, Wallachia, and the Turks.⁹⁹ A couple of months later, in July, the army of the Teutonic Knights was crushed at Grünwald by the forces under the command of Wladislas Jagiello and Witold. The king of Hungary failed to show any notable military action, in accordance with the alliance treaty.

Jagiello and Witold could not enjoy the victory, for the alliance with the schismatics and Muslims against a military order which was subordinated to the pope had seriously affected their reputation.¹⁰⁰ The military confrontation turned into a "propaganda" campaign, both sides taking up an arduous diplomatic campaign to defend their cause. Initially, the Teutonic Order had a huge advantage when the king of Poland and the duke of Lithuania were charged for their actions against the Order and the crusade.¹⁰¹ At this stage of the conflict, Sigismund of Luxemburg's involvement was a lot more consistent. In August 1410, in a letter addressed to all the Christian princes, the king of Hungary showed bewilderment at what had happened and lamented the death of the grand master and of a high number of Teutonic knights during the fight with the "schismatic and the unfaithful". The king showed that he was willing to give the knights immediate military aid and asked the Catholic princes to follow suit.¹⁰² At the same time, the king's envoy to Italy, Pippo of Ozora, was discussing a future crusade against the Ottomans, in which Sigismund of Luxembourg was to play the leading role.¹⁰³

97 Nowak, *Polityka polnocna Zygmunta Luksenburskiego*, 97–98.

98 A. Lewicki (ed.), *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti II*, (Krakow, 1891), 36.

99 Marian Biskup, "Z badań nad wielką « wojna » z Zakonem krzyżackim", *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, LXVI (1959), 3: 696.

100 Mickūnaitė, *Making a great ruler*, 35.

101 Eric Christiansen, *La Crociate del Nord. Il Baltico e la frontiera cattolica (1100–1525)*, trans. Donatella Levi, (Bologna, 1983), 284–295.

102 Nowak, *Polityka polnocna Zygmunta Luksenburskiego*, 131–132.

103 Elemér Mályusz (ed.), *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, 11/2 (1407–1410), (Budapest, 1959), 408; Beckmann, *Der Kampf Kaiser Sigismunds*, 37–56.

In turn, Wladislas Jagiello strengthened his connections with the “schismatic and unfaithful”, with the purpose of discouraging the bellicose intentions of the Hungarian king. In May 1411, the king of Poland concluded a new treaty of alliance against Hungary with the prince of Wallachia. Should the king of Hungary attack Poland, Mircea was to join the battle and head against Hungary.¹⁰⁴ A couple of days later, Prince Alexander of Moldavia gave his suzerain strong reassurances that he would participate should he go to war with the king of Hungary.¹⁰⁵ The relation between the Polish-Lithuanian union and the Tartars was a special one. Many thousands of disenchanting followers of Toqtamış settled in Lithuania, forming the community of Lithuanian Tatars. Toqtamış’s son, Djalaledin, was present at the battle of Grünwald, and in 1412 he ascended the throne of the Golden Horde. Witold was held in high esteem among the Tatars and played the role of “khan maker.”¹⁰⁶

Between March and November 1411, negotiations took place at Bártfa between the ambassadors of Hungary and Poland. In the process, the Hungarian part obtained the recognition of Sigismund’s claims of suzerainty over Moldavia and its reseating under King Sigismund’s authority with Polish political and military assistance. Subsequently, the Polish camp changed its position radically, prompting the Hungarian mediator to write to Wladislas Jagiello to express his dissatisfaction.¹⁰⁷ In March 1412, Wladislas Jagiello and Sigismund of Luxembourg met at Lubowla in order to sign the peace treaty between their kingdoms. King Sigismund admitted king Wladislas’s control over Russia and Podolia throughout the span of his lifetime, allowing for renegotiations when one of the two monarchs passed away. Moreover, the king of Hungary acknowledged the relationship between the Polish king and the prince of Moldavia, with a separate clause concerning the fight against the Turks. In the spirit of the brotherly relation between the two kings, the prince of Moldavia was obliged to join King Sigismund with his army if the Ottomans attacked Hungary. If the prince failed to comply with this obligation, the treaty stipulated the possibility of his removal and of splitting Moldavia between the two kingdoms, so that the north-eastern area together with Akkerman would go to Poland and the south-western part, including Kilia, to Hungary.¹⁰⁸

104 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 1/2, 472–473.

105 Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești*, II, 639.

106 Kolodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania*, 8–9.

107 Fl. Constantiniu and Șerban Papacostea, “Tratatul de la Lublau (15 martie 1412) și situația internațională a Moldovei la începutul veacului al XV-lea”, *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, XVII (1964), 5: 1131–1132; Deletant, “Moldavia between Hungary and Poland”: 208–210.

108 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 1/2, 483–487.

Compared with his demands formulated in 1397, Sigismund obtained very little, but nevertheless he forged new allies and improved his chances of controlling the mouth of the Danube. In turn, Jagiello's credibility was badly damaged, because he had accepted the sacrifice of his faithful liege who, in the previous year, had promised him that he would fight with him against the king of Hungary. The attitude of the Polish king may have been influenced by Sigismund's position as mediator in the dispute with the Teutonic Order,¹⁰⁹ a fact which might explain the conceding of Moldavia. Another explanation, based on Dlugosz's information, is that a secret agreement existed between the two kings regarding the future of the Teutonic Order, which was to be removed from Prussia. Therefore, Jagiello made a compromise in the case of Moldavia, while Sigismund sacrificed the Teutonic Order to Poland's interests.¹¹⁰

The conclusion of the Hungarian-Polish peace was hailed as a great success, and was celebrated accordingly in Hungary.¹¹¹ In a letter from 1412 addressed to the Byzantine emperor, King Sigismund presented the peace as an alliance against the Ottomans that would save the Christian world.¹¹² The intentions of the two monarchs converge to a large extent: Wladislas tried to mediate peace between Hungary and Venice in order to end a conflict that was seen as a major obstacle for the war against the Ottomans.¹¹³ Although it would seem

109 Marian Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy during the Angevin and Jagiellonian Era (1370–1572)", *The History of Polish Diplomacy X–XX c.*, ed. Gerard Labuda and Waldemar Michowicz, (Warsaw, 2005), 79.

110 Virgil Ciocâltan, "Sigismund von Luxemburg und die Frage der Verpflanzung des Deutschen Ordens an die Untere Donau in den Jahren 1412–1420", *Generalprobe Burzenland. Neue Forschungen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens in Siebenbürgen und im Banat*, ed. Konrad Gündisch, (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2013), 160–174.

111 C. Norbert Tóth, "Zsigmond magyar és II. Ulászló lengyel király személyes találkozó a lublói béke után (1412–1424)", *Történelmi Szemle*, LVI (2014), 3: 344–347.

112 "Ex quibus vestre serenitatis perspicacitas clare potest colligere, ut quamquam cum serenissimo principe domino Wladislao rege Polonie fratre nostro carissimo ad reprimendos et propulsandos de finibus istis circa mare Turcorum insultus pro dilatatione fidei orthodoxe, utinam votis nostris superna clementia annuat, diligenti studio laborare ex firmato et inalterabili proposito decrevimus, sed, ut coniunctim scripsimus, vestrum consilium pariter et voluntatem votis nostris concurrere gratanter affectaremus" (Heinrich Finke (ed.), *Acta Concilii Constanciensis*, I, (Münster, 1896), 397).

113 "Item assertum est nobis dominum Regem Polonie dixisse Regi Hungarie, quod eius intentio, ob hanc guerram nostram impeditur, que eius intentio esset guerrizare contra infideles, et nisi fiat pax nobiscum, male contra infideles posset aliquid obtineri, propter potentiam nostram maritimam. Item quod dominus Rex Polonie promittit tractare, et facere pacem cum honore nostre domini" (August Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do history Jagiellónów z archiwów weneckich. Cześć I", *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk*

that Sigismund's efforts to control the mouth of the Danube were closely related to the war against the Ottomans, one may argue that it was connected more to the fight against the Venetians. Sigismund's special interest in Kilia was explained by Romanian historians from the perspective of the economic consequences of the war with Venice, highlighting the king's plan to undermine Venice's commerce in the East. In 1412, King Sigismund sent an emissary to Caffa inviting Khan Djalaleddin to jointly reopen the ancient commercial road which connected China to Crimea and the Danube.¹¹⁴ During the spring of that year, an embassy from the khan visited Buda, offering gifts to kings Wladislas and Sigismund, in a diplomatic mission that terrified the Venetians.¹¹⁵ King Sigismund was willing to occupy Kilia immediately and to that effect he even had a plan which he abandoned later on. On 26 May 1413, Sigismund wrote to Scibor of Sciborzyc Ostojczyk, informing him that the plan to conquer Kilia could not be accomplished and that a thorough preparation of the entire action was needed. The king and his barons would address this issue upon his return to Hungary.¹¹⁶

Moreover, Wladislas Jagiello was not willing to give up his rights over Moldavia so easily. In 1413, he asked Pope John XXIII to establish a Catholic bishopric in Moldavia, subordinated to the Catholic Archbishopric of Lwow. The pope thought that establishing a Catholic bishopric in a city where the Greek-Orthodox metropolitan had his seat was beneficial for bringing the schismatic under the authority of the Holy See. Jagiello deliberately misinformed the pope, because Moldavia already had a Catholic bishopric subordinated directly to the Holy See, and there was no Greek-Orthodox metropolitan seat in Baia. Thus, the aim of the Polish king was to enforce the subordination

Poznańskiego, xv, (1887): 39; Boleslaw Stachon, *Polityka Polski wobec Turcyi i akcyi antytyreckiej w wieku xv do utraty Kilii i Bialogrodu (1484)*, (Lwow, 1930), 35–37).

114 Papacostea, *La Mer Noire*, 235–245; G. I. Brătianu, *Recherches sur Vicina et Cetatea Albă*, (Bucharest, 1935), 120–121.

115 “De quo praedictus Sigismundus Rex admodum laetatus, et ipsam in magnum gloriae et suae famae cumulum referens, hostes suos, Venetos, legatione ipsa territabat” (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 328).

116 Document without year, dated 1411–1416 in H. Heimpel, “Aus der Kanzlei Kaiser Sigismunds”, *Archiv für Urkundenforschung*, xii (1931), 1: 179. Other dates were suggested for 1411, before the treaty of Lubowla (Constantiniu and Papacostea, *Tratatul de la Lublau*, 138) and 1413, based on the matching information about a rebellion prepared inside the realm, also mentioned in a letter to Queen Beatrice, from 26 May 1413 (Elemér Mályusz (ed.), *Zsigmondkori oklevéltár*, IV (1413–1414), (Budapest, 1994), 173). As the document in question is dated on 26 May, it is highly probably that it was issued on the same day as the letter sent to Queen Beatrice, taking into account their similar content.

of Moldavia to him and he wanted legitimation from the pope for his rights over Moldavia.¹¹⁷

Ottoman Threat and Crusading in Jagiello's Policy

Sigismund of Luxembourg's travel to the West and the beginning of the Council of Constance changed the king's political priorities. Although he remained in touch with the state of affairs in Hungary, Sigismund spent a long time abroad, eager to promote his status of champion of Christendom and pacifier, engaged in restoring the unity of the Church, fighting against heresy, freeing Greek-Orthodox Christians from the Turks, and liberating the Holy Land.¹¹⁸ Unlike Sigismund and his ambitions, the king of Poland had a more pragmatic attitude throughout the period toward the crusade and the Ottoman threat, prompted by the need to counteract the Teutonic Order's propaganda against him. Against the supporters of the Order, who claimed that Wladislas and all the Christians who had fought against the Knights deserve eternal damnation,¹¹⁹ the Polish envoys at the council argued that Wladislas Jagiello was a defender of the Church. They also argued for moving the Order to the Eastern borders of Christendom to fight against the Turks and the Tartars. The rector of the University of Krakow, Paul Wlodkowich, presented a *Tractatus de potestate papae et imperatoris respectu infidelium* during the council debates, in a theological approach strongly influenced by the political realities of the Polish-Lithuanian union, which questioned the conception of the crusade as pope's instrument against heretics, schismatics and pagans. According to Wlodkowich, the pope as of Vicar of Christ could order an attack against the infidels only in the Holy Land; the pope and the emperor had no right to unleash a war against a peaceful un-Christian population, for the use of force is incompatible with the free will as formulated in the Bible. Moreover, by virtue of the divine will, the infidels and schismatics have the right to possess their own states, and the Catholics must be tolerant and the conversions made only through peaceful means.¹²⁰ In reply, the text known as *Satira contra hereses et cetera nephanda Polonorum et eorum regis Jaghel*, compiled by the Dominican Johannes Falkenberg, was a virulent reaction against Wladislas Jagiello,

117 Liviu Pilat, *Studii privind relațiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun și Patriarhia Ecumenică (secolele XIV–XVI)*, (Iași, 2012), 86–89.

118 Beckmann, *Der Kampf Kaiser Sigismunds*, 89–91.

119 Christiansen, *Le crociate del Nord*, 292–293.

120 Ludwik Erlich (ed.), *Pisma wybrane Pawła Włodkowica*, I, (Warsaw, 1969), 2–98.

described as a pagan disguised as a Christian, and the Poles, named heretics because they followed Jagiello; so their heresy had to be exterminated. The protests of the Polish deputation and diplomatic action¹²¹ led to Falkenberg's imprisoning and the denial of any implication of the Teutonic Order. The writing was not condemned as heresy, but Falkenberg retracted the calumnies from his work.¹²²

In 1414, the Ottomans resumed the offensive against Bosnia, and in August 1415 they defeated the Hungarian army in the Battle of Doboj. This victory marked the end of Sigismund's influence and the beginning of the Ottomans' active role in the politics of Bosnia.¹²³ Whilst in Constance, Sigismund received good news about his plan for a great crusade against the Turks, but he was also informed about the Ottoman attacks against Hungary. In August 1415, the Council of Constance demanded the king of Poland protect Hungary from Ottoman attacks and send a legate to advise the Hungarian nobles during their king's absence.¹²⁴ According to the chronicle of Długosz, after receiving the letters from Constance, Władislas Jagiello sent two emissaries to the sultan, Skarbko of Gora and Gregory the Armenian, with a demand to stop attacking Hungary, to free all the captives, and to conclude a six-year armistice with the king of Hungary. The Polish ambassadors were well received, and the sultan accepted the king's proposal, sending emissaries to negotiate the truce. Skarbko of Gora returned home via Wallachia to inform the king, while Gregory the Armenian, accompanied by the Ottoman emissaries, headed toward Hungary. Lacking safe conduct, the sultan's emissaries stopped at the border. Gregory the Armenian was detained by the count of Temeswar, Pipo of Ozora, imprisoned and tortured. The Ottoman emissaries learned about this turn of events and abandoned their mission. Gregory the Armenian was released and returned to Poland only at Władislas's intervention.¹²⁵

The course of events is confirmed by a letter sent by Prince Mircea to King Władislas, in an attempt to fend off the king's accusations regarding his role in misinforming the Hungarian nobles. Mircea's letter reveals that the reason for

121 Karol Górski, *Dziejów walki o pokój i sprawiedliwość międzynarodowa. "Ostatnie słowo Pawła Włodkowica o Zakonie krzyżackim"*, (Torun, 1964), 13–16.

122 Bernhard Bess, "Johannes Falkenberg O. P. und der Preussisch-Polnische Streit vor dem Konstanzer Konzil", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XVI (1895), 3: 458–460.

123 John Van Antwerp Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest*, (The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 468–469.

124 Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, VII/1, trans. Dom. H. Leclercq, (Paris, 1916), 356–357.

125 Długossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 361–362; Stachon, *Polityka Polski wobec Turcyi*, 41–43; Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, 328–330.

arresting the Polish emissary was a suspicion that the king of Poland wanted to ally with the Ottomans against the king of Hungary and against Christendom.¹²⁶ The similarity between the calumnies about Jagiello's pagan past and the suspicion of his alliance with the Turks against the Christians is very striking, although there is no direct link between them. It is very likely that suspicions about the honesty of Jagiello's conversion to Christianity were widespread at the time, but only Johannes Falkenberg dared to declare them publically. The rumor about a secret agreement between the Polish king and the Ottomans reached Constance as well, but it was refuted by the Polish deputation, on 28 November 1415, when they presented King Wladislas's and Grand Duke Witold's message. According to it, the attacks from the Teutonic Order prevented Poland from helping Hungary while the emissaries were sent to the sultan to conclude a peace. In contrast with such honest intentions the Hungarians chose to trust their own strengths and to doubt their allies.¹²⁷

Despite the general misgivings, King Wladislas's policy of tolerance toward the unfaithful and schismatics had spectacular results. The participants at the Council of Constance were highly impressed by the declarations of the deputation from Samogitia who showed they were willing to accept Christian baptism immediately, following the example of King Wladislas and that of the Grand Duke Witold, accomplishing what the Teutonic Order could not with fire and sword.¹²⁸ In 1415, Wladislas Jagiello met Alexander of Moldavia who paid a new corporal oath, following the Polish ritual and received Pokutya from the king.¹²⁹ This moment represented a new assertion of Polish suzerainty over Moldavia after the treaty from Lubowla and an adjustment of Moldavia's status in compliance with the terms of the Horodlo convention, which introduced a clear distinction between Polish and the Lithuanian affairs.¹³⁰

Meanwhile, the emissaries of the Byzantine emperor and of the Patriarch of Constantinople arrived in Poland. They asked the king to allow the supply of Constantinople with grains, which had become ever more difficult because of the Turks. Wladislas approved their demand and put the port of Kaczubyeiow

126 "Scripsisti ad me litteras querelarum plenas et valde me accusas, quod ego per litteras meas proceribus ac dominis Hungariae et illi regi suo narraverant misisse te litteras et legatos tuos ad Turcos, ut amicitia contraheretis et bellum in omnium Christianorum et regis Hungarorum damnum moveretis" (Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 1/2, 825).

127 Hefele, *Histoire des conciles*, VII/1, 364.

128 A. Lewicki (ed), *Index actorum saeculi XV ad res publicas Poloniae spectantium que quidem typis edita sunt*, (Krakow, 1888), no. 831; Frost, *Poland-Lithuania Union*, 125.

129 Martin Kromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum*, (Basel, 1555), 401.

130 Pilat, "The Vassal Homage": 73–76.

(Odessa) at their disposal for provisioning the Byzantines.¹³¹ The help granted to Byzantium was not entirely disinterested. In 1415, although the Byzantine emperor and the patriarch had refused to replace Metropolitan Photios, Witold convoked a synod of the Russian bishops from his territories to elect Gregory Camblak as metropolitan of Kiev. The synodal act mentioned that the bishops did not wish to separate from the Greek Church, but they could not accept Emperor Manuel's intrusion in the affairs of the Church to the benefit of his treasury.¹³²

This episode was tightly connected to Wladislas's and Witold's political actions, who were interested in establishing control over the Greek-Orthodox population from their territories and to pose as restorers of ecclesiastical unity in the eyes of the participants at the Council of Constance. In February 1418, Gregory Camblak, a famous anti-Latin polemist before he became a metropolitan, presented the Ruthenian Church's sincere intention to accomplish the complete union between the Catholics and the Greek-Orthodox at the Council, which the metropolitan of Kiev had already started to fulfill in his diocese. As a unique strategy to obtain the union, he proposed the calling of an ecumenical council to be prepared by a papal delegation to the East.¹³³ At the time, Gregory Camblak had already been excommunicated by the Patriarch of Constantinople, but Witold's support proved to be far stronger than the Byzantine tradition.¹³⁴ In 1420, another Byzantine embassy led by Manuel Philanthropenos went to Poland to convince the Grand Duke Witold to accept Photios as a metropolitan and to confer with Wladislas Jagiello about two other issues: the union of the Church and the kingdom's support for the fight against the Ottomans. In the same year, the Burgundian emissary, Gilbert of Lannoy visited Poland, Lithuania and Moldavia to discuss the involvement of the Eastern rulers in a crusade.¹³⁵

The Byzantine diplomatic mission to Poland took place in a very complicated political context for the North-Danubian territories. Toward the end of the Council of Constance, the king of the Romans resumed his plans for Eastern Europe, becoming more and more eager to apply the treaty of Lubowla. On 28 January 1418, while still in Constance, Sigismund of Luxembourg entrusted

131 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 367.

132 *Русская историческая библиотека*, VI, (St. Petersburg, 1880), 311.

133 Gerhard Podskalsky, "L'intervention de Gregorij Camblak, métropolitaine de Kiev, au Concile de Constance", *Revue des Études Slaves*, LXX/2 (1998): 289–297.

134 *Русская историческая библиотека*, VI, 357–360.

135 Oscar Halecki, "La Pologne et l'Empire Byzantine", *Byzantion. Revue Internationales des Études Byzantines*, VII (1932): 54–57.

brothers Johann and Konrad Vischer with the plans of a road which had to connect Kilia, Caffa and Pera to Germany and Hungary.¹³⁶ Two years later Sigismund approached the officials of Gdansk and Torun to establish a new connection with Caffa.¹³⁷ Controlling the area north of the Black Sea, King Sigismund was strengthening his position in order to help Byzantium and to organise a crusade against the Ottomans. For that purpose, in January 1420, Manuel Philanthropenos mediate in the name of the Byzantine emperor the peace between Sigismund of Luxembourg and Venice, as a premise of the crusade against the infidels and of the religious union. Two months later, in July 1420, Pope Martin v called on all of Christendom to support a future expedition.¹³⁸

Meanwhile the Ottomans became increasingly interested in the north of the Black Sea area, possibly as a reaction to the plan of crusade against them. In 1417, the Ottomans reconquered Silistra and Dobrogea and, after the death of Mircea the Elder, Ottoman influence over Wallachia increased.¹³⁹ In 1420, the circumstances were favourable for Mehmed I to undertake a wide action northwest of the Black Sea: the sultan had concluded peace with Venice, while in Wallachia prince Mircea's sons were fighting each other for power.¹⁴⁰ The sultan's great expedition from 1420 aimed at bringing Wallachia under control and at conquering Kilia and Akkerman, which ensured the control over the mouth of the Danube and the northern Black Sea region.¹⁴¹ A different interpretation holds that it was not a campaign led by the sultan, but it involved military actions of the beys from the Danube who came to Radu Praznaglava's aid, a candidate to the throne of Wallachia, and attacks of the *akincis'* troops against Kilia and Akkerman.¹⁴²

136 Antal Áldásy, "Adalékok az ipar és kereskedelem történetéhez Zsigmond király idejében", *Történelmi Szemle*, xiii (1928): 141–142; Wilhem Altmann (ed.), *Regesta imperii*, xi/1, (Innsbruck, 1896), no. 2857.

137 Wilhelm Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund: Hus, Konstanz und die Türkenkriege*, (Graz-Köln, 1993), 147.

138 John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 337–339.

139 Gemil, *Romanians and Ottomans*, 139–141.

140 Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "Ottoman Diplomacy and the Danube Frontier (1420–1424)", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vii (1983): 683.

141 Anca Ghiță, "Condițiile instaurării dominației otomane în Dobrogea," *Studii istorice sud-est europene*, i, ed. Eugen Stănescu, (Bucharest, 1974), 88–92; Viorica Pervain, "Lupta antiotomană a Țărilor Române în anii 1419–1420," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Cluj*, xix (1976): 73–75.

142 Gemil, *Romanians and Ottomans*, 143.

The details regarding the Ottoman expedition northwest of the Black Sea can be found in the correspondence between Sigismund of Luxembourg and Wladislas Jagiello from summer 1420, but historical interpretations of the letters had to take into account the political actions of two monarchs. In July 1420, King Wladislas declined the emperor's demand of military aid against the Hussites, stating that his hands were full with the provocations from the Teutonic Order and with the Ottoman actions against Moldavia. He informed Sigismund about the Ottomans gaining total control over Wallachia, followed by an attack against Moldavia on land and by sea. The Ottomans attacked Akkerman fortress, terrifying Voivode Alexander of Moldavia who sent three requests of military aid to the Polish king. King Wladislas answered immediately, and together with Witold, the king started at the head of his army to fight against the enemies of Christendom, leaving him unable to offer Sigismund the military support he had asked for.¹⁴³

On 15 August 1420, Sigismund sent his answer to the Polish king, giving his appreciation for the promptness displayed by King Wladislas and Witold for defending Moldavia. The emperor also shared the news that after consultations with the Hungarian nobles he would send a great army against the infidels, mentioning also a possible common action against the Turks in Moldavia.¹⁴⁴

143 A. Prochaska (ed.), *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi Magni Ducis Lithuaniae 1370–1430* (Krakow, 1882), 486–488; “Suscipit itaque V. F. quomodo Theucris hostis vestri et tocius religione christiane generales inimici, parta suorum exercitum potencia, terras transalpinas furore referti intraverunt, quibus undique peragratis ipsas post multas et inennarabiles cedas et penurias in totum sibi subegerunt et omagii fidelitatis ab eisdem sevis comminationibus extortis, tributa et dacias graves receperunt ac deinde sub tuicione suorum presidiorum derelictis, ad terras Valachiae Minoris cum ingenti classe navigantes per maria descendunt et quoddam castrum Balohrod waywode Moldaue, vasalli nostri vallaverunt impugnationibus illud invadentes, quorum sic videns prefatus waywoda inclusum periculis, ad nostra recurrens subsidia, primum nuncios suos circa festum pentecostes beati Joannis et demum sancti Jacobi proxime preteriti ad nos cum humili devocione destinavit, supplicans, quatenus sibi et terris priusquam ad interioria dominiorum suorum perveniant; et proinde piis comoti erga cum visceribus et ut afuturis occuramus dispendiis que possent omnibus gentibus nostris omnium terrarum terris Valachie predictae vicinarum et inclitus frater noster dominus Alexander alias Witowdus magnus dux Lythwanie suis pari modo in succursum prefati waywode e vestigio proficisci et nunc hic in terra Sandomiriensi agimus et successive terras Russiae accedimus, ut si idem waywoda atrociori insultu suorum hoscium predictorum, quod absit, teneretur, facilius sibi cum prefato fratre nostro domino Alexandro propriis in personis, si requirat necessitas, possemus subvenire (ibid. 487).

144 “Ecce siquidem et nos frater carissime novitatibus predictis ad nos paulo ante deductis, baronum regni nostri Ungarie nobiscum existencium concordia communicato consilio, iam exercitum copiosum nostrum contra dictos Turcos disposuimus, sperantes in

Emperor Sigismund's determination to start against the Ottomans in Moldavia was just a façade. In a letter to the Teutonic Order from 25 August 1420, Sigismund informed them that he gave up on his previous plan concerning the road which connected Kilia and Hungary, because Kilia had been conquered by the Turks.¹⁴⁵ Kilia's conquest by the Ottomans in 1420 is not unanimously accepted by scholarship.¹⁴⁶ Similar doubts are cast upon the attack of the Ottoman fleet because the Ottomans did not own a fleet at the time as it had been destroyed by the Venetians a couple of years earlier.¹⁴⁷ It is very likely that the Polish king's letter contains certain exaggerations, especially if we consider the relations between Wladislas Jagiello and Sigismund of Luxembourg in 1420.

On 6 January 1420, after a long delay, the emperor made known his decision as arbiter of the conflict between the Kingdom of Poland and the Teutonic Order, a decision favourable to the Teutonic Knights.¹⁴⁸ It came as an unpleasant surprise to Wladislas Jagiello who, according to Dlugosz, burst into tears upon hearing the decision. Zbigniew Olesnicki was sent to the emperor with a message which contained all the services the king of Poland had made to the emperor: the money spent to redeem the prisoners from Nicopolis and the gifts made to the sultan for concluding the peace with Hungary during the Council of Constance. The letter also invited Sigismund to remember the meeting from Lubowla and the agreement concluded with that occasion.¹⁴⁹ In other words, with Sigismund's decision the treaty of Lubowla was void and the Hungarian-Polish hostility before 1412 was once again reestablished. Meanwhile a new reason for conflict appeared related to Hussite Bohemia, when the nobles of the realm refused to acknowledge Sigismund of Luxembourg's crowning as King of Bohemia. At the emperor's request, in March 1420 Pope Martin v proclaimed the crusade against the Hussites. Leading a great army, Sigismund left for Prague but, on 14 July 1420, the "crusaders" were defeated at Vitkov by

domino exercituum, cuius direccione cuncta reguntur, quod exercitu nostro illuc perveniente vestroque et prefati fratris nostri communis succursu contra dictos Turcos in terra Moldauię descendente et virtute unita, valida et concordi, que forcior est dispersa, contra eosdem Turcos viriliter agente, repulsa et contrita predictorum Turcorum protervia, utrumque terre nostre et vestre ac fratris nostri communis per nostrum et vestrum exercitum favente domino et clemencius adiuvente feliciter protegentur" (Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 491–492).

145 Constantiniu and Papacostea, "Tratatul de la Lublau": 139.

146 C. Cihodaru, *Alexandru cel Bun (23 aprilie 1399–1 ianuarie 1432)*, (Iași, 1986), 258–259.

147 Pervain, "Lupta antiotomană": 74.

148 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 81.

149 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 415–418.

the Taborite army, commanded by Jan Žižka.¹⁵⁰ In this complicated political context for Sigismund, Wladislas Jagiello refused to grant military aid on the pretext of the Ottoman invasion in Moldavia. Given the fact that Sigismund's plans for Kilia were based on the anti-Ottoman component of the treaty of Lubowla, his retreat from the defense of Moldavia equaled with a cancelling of that clause. This is the reason why Sigismund agreed to join Wladislas in fighting against the Ottomans in Moldova, though all the while he had no intention of doing so, for he had already made plans for recovering Kilia and opening a commercial road. All this time his army was preparing to fight in Bohemia and Wladislas Jagiello knew that. In the context of this political-diplomatic game, the scale of the Ottoman attack on Moldavia might have been highly exaggerated by the Polish chancellery. Furthermore, we can even question whether the Polish-Lithuanian troops had fought against the Turks in Moldavia.¹⁵¹

Witold's Ambition to Control North-Western Black Sea

The political-diplomatic game became even more interesting after the Bohemians offered the crown of their kingdom to Wladislas Jagiello. Wladislas refused the offer, despite the temptation of a revenge against Sigismund, thus avoiding any association with the Hussite heresy.¹⁵² The Bohemians turned to his cousin and, without Wladislas's agreement, Witold accepted the crown of Bohemia. From 1420 to 1422, Witold acted independently and against his cousin, eager to strengthen his position within the Polish-Lithuanian union. Wladislas Jagiello was opposed to Witold's plans and supported Swidrigiello, trying to reach an agreement with Sigismund of Luxembourg to isolate Witold through his agency.¹⁵³

As for Moldavia, Witold acted against Sigismund of Luxembourg's oriental plans, but also against Jagiello, trying to take control over the northwestern area of the Black Sea exactly at the time of the Ottoman attack. In a letter sent to Sigismund, Witold stated that the prince of Moldavia had reached an agreement with the Turks, therefore his removal from the Moldavian throne,

150 Frederick G. Heymann, "The Crusades against the Hussites", *History of the Crusades*, III, ed. Keneth S. Setton, (Wisconsin, 1975), 593–598.

151 Zachariadou, "Ottoman Diplomacy and the Danube Frontier": 684.

152 Anton Prochaska, *Król Wladislaw Jagiello*, II, (Krakow, 1908), 64–70.

153 Jaroslaw Nikodem, *Polska i Litwa wobec husyckich Czech w latach 1420–1433. Studium o polityce dynastycznej Wladislawa Jagielly i Witolda Kiejstutowicza*, (Poznan, 2004), 231–265; For a different view see Frost, *Poland-Lithuania Union*, 134–150.

with the approval of the kings of Hungary and Poland, would be beneficial for Christendom. Unfortunately, the letter is not dated, but it can be ascertained that it was written around this time because it refers to the Byzantine embassy and the enthroning of a new sultan.¹⁵⁴

Sigismund knew of a secret agreement between the king of Poland and the sultan, but Wladislas Jagiello exonerated himself arguing that these accusations were calumnies.¹⁵⁵ The accusation against the prince of Moldavia came into the context of the struggle for power in Wallachia, where Prince Alexander supported Radu Praznaglava, the candidate who was also favored by the Ottomans, to the detriment of Dan II, supported by the king of Hungary. It is noteworthy that Witold described the Moldavian situation in a completely different manner from Wladislas Jagiello, which demonstrates that the Ottoman threat was not taken seriously by either of the two monarchs, being used merely as an instrument in their own political interests. Thus, in summer 1421, Gilbert of Lannoy received a letter of recommendation from Wladislas Jagiello for the sultan, because it was known that the king of Poland was allied with the sultan against the king of Hungary. In Moldavia, the prince warned Gilbert not to pass through Bulgaria because of the fights which broke out after Mehmed I's death and advised him to head toward Akkerman. Upon his arrival Gilbert saw that, following Witold's order, the governor of Podolia came with 12,000 men and 4,000 chariots to build a fortress on the opposite bank of the

154 "De ipso autem woiewoda Alexandro si et in quantum ita esset, quod se sic nequiter cum infidelibus conspiraret sicut in aliis nostris litteris, de quibus supra scripsimus, quod V. S. cum utriusque fratre nostrum domino regi Polonie deliberare vellet et disponere, quid ad hoc opus nepharium esset faciendum, ita et nunc vestre suademus serenitati, velitis cum eodem domino rege ad finalem mentis vestre deliberacionem deuenire et nos de mente vestra informare. Non enim bonum esset, quod hinc in medio nostrum existenti tam perniciosissimum et opus nepharium contra dominum suum, cuius omnia est, dominum regem Polonie contra serenitatem vestram et contra nos ymo contra totam Christianitatem preceptum ad effectum malicie deduceretur" (J. Caro, "Liber cancellariae Stanislai Ciolek. Ein Formelbuch der polnischen Königskanzlei aus der Zeit der husitischen Bewegung", *Archiv für Österreichische Geschichte*, XLV (1871) 2: 482). The document does not have a date or the place where it was issued. Anton Prochaska proposed the beginning of 1426, considering that the act is connected to Sigismund's letter to Witold, from 15 May 1426, in which it is also mentioned prince of Moldavia's support for the candidate to the throne of Wallachia, who had the aid of the Turks (Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 713) Still, the mentioning of the Byzantine embassy, of the new sultan "Turcorum imperatore domino moderno" and of sultan's son "filius Turci ceci", who was to be arrested should he had retreated toward the borders of Lithuania, place the document in 1421–1422, in the context of the fights for the throne which followed Mehmed I's death.

155 *Regesta Imperii*, XI/1, 325.

Dniester.¹⁵⁶ The building of the fortress of Czarnigrad¹⁵⁷ was seen as a hostile act against the prince of Moldavia,¹⁵⁸ not inspired by the Ottoman threat but by Witold's intention to control the northwestern Black Sea and the commercial road which led to Lwow, especially since the treaty of Lubowla had lost its validity.¹⁵⁹

The actions of the grand duke of Lithuania went beyond military gestures and diplomatic intrigues. In 1420, Ringalla, the grand duke's sister, decided to end her marriage to the prince of Moldavia, asking the pope for the divorce through the agency of the bishop of Baia. In the request to the bishop, the facts were greatly distorted: as reasons for the divorce were listed a close degree of affinity and the alleged paganism of Prince Alexander. Claiming that the prince had refused his wife's exhortations to embrace the Catholic faith, the document mirrored Alexander as a pagan denying even his schismatic faith. As a result, in July 1420, Pope Martin V cancelled the marriage, offering Witold a new pretext to attack Moldavia.¹⁶⁰ On 14 April 1422, Sigismund of Luxemburg sent a letter to the grand master of the Teutonic Order informing him that Witold was gathering troops to set against the prince of Moldavia to avenge the offence brought to his sister, despite the agreement between the king of Poland and the prince.¹⁶¹ The emperor disliked the idea of a Lithuanian invasion in Moldavia and, on 5 May 1422, he gave the Teutonic Order assurances against the Polish-Lithuanian threat. Sigismund added that he had agreed with the Hungarian nobles to lend military support to the prince of Moldavia, who had switched over to his side, so that Witold's expedition in Moldavia would be a failure.¹⁶² On the same day, Sigismund asked for the Pope's support, emphasizing the assistance that Wladislas Jagiello and Witold gave to the Hussites and the grand duke's intention to attack Moldavia.¹⁶³

The Lithuanian expedition against Moldavia never took place because, taking advantage of the situation in Bohemia, King Wladislas and Witold decided, in

156 Maria Holban, "Du caractère de l'ambassade de Guillebert de Lannoy dans le Nord et le Sud-Est de l'Europe en 1421 et de quelques incidents de son voyage", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, v (1967), 3-4: 420-428.

157 Cazacu, "A propos de l'expansion polono-lituanienne au nord de la Mer Noire", 101-102.

158 Olgierd Górka, "Zagadnienie czarnomorskie w polityce polskiego średniowiecza", *Przegląd Historyczny*, xxx (1932-1933), 2., 370-371.

159 Virgil Ciocâltan, "Raporturi moldo-lituaniene (1420-1429)", *România în istoria universală*, III/1, (Iași, 1988), 130-134.

160 Pilat, *Studii privind relațiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun și Patriarhia Ecumenică*, 90-95.

161 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 547.

162 *Regesta imperii*, XI/1, 342-344.

163 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 550.

July 1422, to start a war against the Teutonic Order. The army of the Moldavian prince fought in the war and took part in the victory against the Teutonic Knights near Marienburg.¹⁶⁴ This participation proves that, at that moment, Prince Alexander did not really switch over to Emperor Sigismund's side. With the Treaty of Melno, Lithuania received Samogitia, a fact recognised by Sigismund of Luxembourg in March 1423 at Kiezmark, when he met the king of Poland. On this occasion, the two kings reconfirmed the Treaty of Lubowla, the reconciliation between the two monarchs being followed by a visit paid by the emperor in Poland.¹⁶⁵ The reconfirmation of the Treaty of Lubowla meant the revival of the anti-Ottoman alliance and the safety of a road between the Kingdom of Hungary and Kilia, but the situation remained tense because of the dispute between Moldavia and Wallachia's princes for control over Kilia.¹⁶⁶ Wallachia became a contested area between Hungary and the Ottomans, chiefly because it had not been included in the Hungarian-Ottoman truce. The struggle for the throne between Dan II and Radu Praznaglava was also a struggle between the two powers to control that region.¹⁶⁷

A Failed Anti-Ottoman Campaign

In 1426, when the armistice ended, the Hungarian-Ottoman rivalry over Wallachia and Serbia escalated once again.¹⁶⁸ In May, the king of Hungary negotiated with Stephen Lazarević and obtained the banate of Mačva, with the fortresses Belgrade and Golubac,¹⁶⁹ but in the same month the Ottomans invaded Wallachia and defeated Prince Dan II, who was forced to retreat towards Hungary.¹⁷⁰ Despite the failure, Sigismund was optimistic. He informed the bishop of Winchester that he had three armies ready to go against the

164 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 461–462.

165 Tóth, “Zsigmond magyar és II. Ulászló lengyel király”: 347–352.

166 Șerban Papacostea, “Kilia et la politique orientale de Sigismond de Luxembourg”, *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, xv (1976), 3: 429–430; P. P. Panaitescu, “Legăturile moldo-polone în secolul xv și problema Chilieii”, *Romanoslavica*, III (1958): 98–102; Ștefan Andreescu, “Une ville disputée: Kilia pendant la première moitié du XV^e siècle”, *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, xxiv (1985) 3: 225–228.

167 Pervain, “Lupta antiotomană”, 92–102; Liviu Cîmpeanu, “Dan al II -lea, Sigismund de Luxemburg și cruciada târzie. Un document inedit din arhiva Ordinului teutonic”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, xxx (2012): 58–62.

168 Inalcik, “The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades”, 259.

169 Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 523–524.

170 Pervain, “Lupta antiotomană”: 105.

heretics and infidels, and that he would take part personally in the expedition against the Turks.¹⁷¹ Apart from difficulties in Bohemia, the political context was favourable to Sigismund of Luxembourg to initiate a new anti-Ottoman expedition. Reconciled with Poland and Venice, Sigismund of Luxembourg was organizing his own coronation in Rome and wanted to pacify Italy, to reconquer the Holy Land, and to reclaim the Christian territories held by the Ottomans.¹⁷²

The expedition in Wallachia was a good opportunity to test the anti-Ottoman clause of the treaty of Lubowla, which is why Sigismund asked Wladislas Jagiello to send 5,000 soldiers to fight against the Turks, and to that end the king of Poland ordered preparations.¹⁷³ Sigismund suspected that, in agreement with the Ottomans, the prince of Moldavia was supporting Radu Praznaglava, but the king of Poland disproved the rumor. Wladislas Jagiello sent Michael Buczacki to Moldavia, and its lord gave assurances that he will take part in the expedition prepared against the Ottomans. Prince Alexander also signed a document consenting to the passage of the Polish army through his country.¹⁷⁴ Led by Jan Kobilenski, the Polish army advanced toward the Danube and set camp at Brăila to make junction with the Hungarian troops. Eventually, Sigismund did not show up with his forces and, after a two-month wait, the Polish army retreated after fighting only with boredom.¹⁷⁵ The presence of the Polish and Moldavian armies on the banks of Danube meant fulfilling the obligation assumed in the treaty of Lubowla and, from this perspective, the campaign was a success.¹⁷⁶ There was also a deficient communication between the two sovereigns, and Wladislas rebuked Sigismund for not answering letters to tell him where to send his troops. In a letter from July 1426, Sigismund excused himself and informed the king of Poland that the destination of the armies was Wallachia as the expedition's aim was to support Prince Dan II. Sigismund also promised that he would send two of his noblemen to guide the

171 "Et oportet nos habere tres exercitus paratos, quamlibet, contra hereticos, infideles dirigendum. Propterea nos propria in persona disponere nostra cum nostris baronibus ordinata volumus, procedere in succursum Dan-Wayda contra Turcos, ubi speramus magnum obsequium christianitati exhibere; eo tamen non obstante, maiorem gentem quam putaverimus, contra hereticos dimittemus" (Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 81).

172 Beckmann, *Der Kampf Kaiser Sigismunds*, 92.

173 Stachon, *Polityka Polski wobec Turcyi*, 69–70.

174 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 723–724.

175 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 494.

176 Ciocâltan, "Raporturi moldo-lituanieni", 141.

Polish army.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the Polish and Moldavian troops did not want to wait, and retreated. At the same time, the Hungarian army was in Transylvania and took no action until the armistice with the Ottomans expired.¹⁷⁸ Toward the end of 1426 and in early 1427, the joint military actions of Sigismund of Luxembourg, Pedro of Coimbra, Pipo of Ozora, and Dan II restored their control over Wallachia, and the Ottomans were beaten back across the Danube.¹⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Murad II tried to counteract the Hungarian-Polish alliance. In May 1427, Witold had learned from the prince of Moldavia that an emissary of the sultan was heading toward him. While the Hungarian-Ottoman war was going on, Jagiello and Witold found themselves in a sensitive situation.¹⁸⁰

The Eastern Border and the Teutonic Knights

The stake of the Hungarian-Ottoman conflict laid in the control over the Danube. Each side had its share of wins and losses. Sigismund of Luxembourg, as a means of strengthening his forces, decided to bring the Teutonic Knights to Severin.¹⁸¹ After the defeat of Golubac and the signing of a new truce with the sultan,¹⁸² the emperor thought of installing the Teutons in Kilia as well,¹⁸³ thereby applying the clause of the treaty of Lubowla concerning Moldavia. In April 1427, after military success in Wallachia, Sigismund offered Kilia to the Teutonic Knights and asked them to bring along colonists from Gdansk

177 "Ceterum sicut vestra fraternitas scribit de vestris gentibus nobis in succursum iam armis bellicis preparatis expeditis, ubi illas V. F. debeat divertere seu quis easdem nostro nomine debeat suscipere, de quibus licet nobis pluries scripseritis nondum tamen aliquod a nobis habuissetis responsum etc. Scire placeat, quod super omnibus litteris et scriptis V. F. nobis transmissis, sine mora et cum omni celeritate respondere curavimus, et potissime ad gentes vestras recipiendas e vestigio duos bonos et notabiles nobiles direximus, qui sicut tenemus iam in Magna Valachia sunt constituti ad prestolandum adventum gentium vestrarum et ad recipiendum eos ac ad conducendum eosdem usque ad Dan woywodam atque ad informandum ipsos ubi gentibus nostris adiungi et adventum nostrum expectare, nec fuit nobis quies aliqua, nisi prius fuissent nuncii vestri cum nostri responsionibus celeriter expediti" (Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 735).

178 Baum, *Kaiser Sigismund: Hus, Konstanz und die Türkenkriege*, 206.

179 Cîmpeanu, "Dan al II -lea, Sigismund de Luxemburg și cruciada târzie", 64–70.

180 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 771.

181 Viorel Achim, "Der Deutsche Orden in der Geschichte des Banats von Severin", *Generalprobe Burzenland. Neue Forschungen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens in Siebenbürgen und im Banat*, ed. Konrad Gündisch, (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2013), 177–183.

182 Inalcik, "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades", 261.

183 N. Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chiliei și Cetății Albe*, (Bucharest, 1899), 86–87.

and Torun: traders, boat constructors, sailors, and experts in building fortifications.¹⁸⁴ The emperor renewed his request on 4 July 1427.¹⁸⁵ In the aftermath of the defeat of Golubac however, Sigismund changed his plan and, on 9 October 1428, he was willing to grant to the knights two fortresses located between Belgrade and Severin in order to defend Hungary against the Ottomans.¹⁸⁶ Still, the emperor never cancelled his plan for Kilia and, during 1428, he made sure of Witold's support in his attempts at persuading Wladislas Jagiello to accept the division of Moldavia.¹⁸⁷ In a letter from 22 August 1428, Witold associated the king of Poland, the prince of Moldavia and Sigismund's defeat at Golubac.¹⁸⁸ In November, in a letter addressed to Sigismund, Witold agreed to discuss Sigismund's claims to Moldavia during the upcoming congress of Luck. The emperor set as a condition for his participation a successful conclusion to his interests in Moldavia, but Witold warned him that king Wladislas's consent was necessary to this end.¹⁸⁹

In January 1429, Sigismund, Jagiello and Witold met at Luck to discuss the situation of Eastern Christianity; the pope's ambassadors and envoys of other Christian states in the region also participated at the congress.¹⁹⁰ According to Dlugosz, Hungarian prelates and barons asked, in the name of Sigismund, the activation of the clause concerning Moldavia in the treaty of Lubowla, calling for a joint military expedition to banish Prince Alexander and divide Moldavia. They argued that Moldavians had been unfaithful and did not join Sigismund's expedition against the Ottomans. Wladislas Jagiello dismissed the proposal and the accusations against Prince Alexander, maintaining that the prince had fulfilled his obligations and had sent troops for the expedition against the Ottomans. Wladislas also stated that Sigismund was responsible for the failure when he did not show at the agreed time and place.¹⁹¹ The chronicler recorded

184 Harald Zimmermann, *Der Deutsche Orden in Siebenbürgen: eine diplomatische Untersuchung*, (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2011), 215–216; Minea, *Politica orientală*, 189.

185 Wilhem Altmann (ed.), *Regesta Imperii*, XI/2, (Innsbruck, 1897–1900), 63.

186 Achim, "Der Deutsche Orden", 182; László Pószán, "Zsigmond és a Német Lovagrend", *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 111 (1998), 3: 109.

187 Ciocâltan, "Raporturi moldo-lituanieni", 141–142.

188 "Geruchet wissen, das uns von den herrn konige czu Polan und ouch von dern Woieuoda uns der Cleine Walachie, Moldaw genannt, von egenantem herrn Romischen konige ist geschrebin, wie das her mit den seinen ein sloss ken der Turkey wert das die Turken halten Holubiecz genent hatte ummelagen, und etliche weil do gestanden, also das her sich dort hatte ummelagen" (Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 800).

189 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 804–805.

190 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 83.

191 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 154–155.

only the controversy between the two monarchs concerning the application of the Treaty of Lubowla, but the discussions at the congress touched many more issues, and Witold's support of Sigismund in the Kilia affair was obvious.¹⁹² The emissaries of the Teutonic Order at Luck wrote down the negotiations concerning Kilia and the decisions taken by Sigismund, Jagiello and Witold regarding Moldavia, which interested them directly.¹⁹³ In a letter from 17 April 1429, addressed to the grand master of the Order, Sigismund approached "the secret matter" and the agreement concluded with Witold at Luck, informing him that the grand duke's envoys were soon heading toward Moldavia and that Kilia was to be given to the emperor. Sigismund was asking the grand master to prepare his men to take over Kilia as soon as possible.¹⁹⁴ Confronted with the Polish king's refusal to put the treaty into practice, Sigismund was content with Kilia alone, which would be transferred to him after Grand Duke Witold settled the frontier dispute between Wallachia and Moldavia.¹⁹⁵

The result of the arbitration could be nothing but favourable to the emperor, considering that he managed to attract the grand duke on his side, thus creating a breach into the Polish-Lithuanian political system. At the conference of Luck, Sigismund made a surprising political move and proposed that a crown be offered to Witold and Lithuania be elevated to the status of kingdom. Wladislas Jagiello agreed,¹⁹⁶ but the Polish nobles and prelates were not as receptive as their king and rejected the proposal, because it went against the treaty of Horodlo, which stipulated clearly that Witold had no hereditary right over Lithuania. Moreover, they relied on a technicality, namely that Sigismund had not been crowned in Rome, to claim that he did not have the imperial right to bestow dignities. Sigismund asked his counselors's opinion; they answered that the king of Romans could erect a new king according to the Roman law, as long as the crowning was a civil act and did not require the benediction of the Church.¹⁹⁷ The new status of Lithuania increased the hostility between the Polish and the Lithuanians. Witold begun to assert himself as an advocate of Sigismund of Luxembourg's oriental policy, including through a failed attempt to extend his domination over Caffa.¹⁹⁸

192 Prochaska, *Król Wladislaw Jagiello*, II, 375.

193 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 809–810.

194 Ibid. 823; Iorga, *Chilia și Cetatea Albă*, 87.

195 Papacostea, "Kilia et la politique orientale": 429–430.

196 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 515–520.

197 Mickūnaitė, *Making a Great Ruler*, 70–71.

198 Ștefan Andreescu, "Trois actes des archives de Gènes concernant l'histoire de la Mer Noire au XV^e siècle", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, XXI (1983), 1: 40.

Despite Sigismund of Luxembourg's optimism, the arbitrage over Kilia was a failure. The initial refusal of the Moldavian emissaries to accept the grand duke's mediation was followed by the absence of the Hungarian deputation at the conference of Troky. In the summer of 1429, fights started between the voivodes of Wallachia and Moldavia, which compromised the grand duke's role of mediator.¹⁹⁹ On 25 June 1429, in a letter addressed to the king of Poland, Witold complained about the attitude displayed by the prince of Moldavia and about his refusal to help Sigismund against the Turks. Witold asked for the intervention of King Wladislas to apply the decisions from Luck.²⁰⁰ In turn, King Wladislas informed Witold that the prince of Wallachia attacked Kilia with Ottoman support, but they were beaten back by the prince of Moldavia. Wladislas reported further that the Moldavian prince was asking for reparations and for this purpose he had asked the king of Poland to write to Sigismund. A copy of the letter was also sent to Witold.²⁰¹ A month later, Sigismund wrote to the grand duke informing him that, because of the troubles in Bohemia, nothing could be done in the matter regarding Wallachia and Moldavia in that summer. On 30 August, Sigismund informed Witold that the prince of Moldavia had built an obstacle to block the access of ships on the Danube.²⁰² Finally, on 4 July 1430, Sigismund notified Witold that the prince of Moldavia had concluded an agreement with the Tartars and had made peace with the Turks.²⁰³

The instructions of the Polish emissary to Sigismund, from summer 1430, offer a different version of the events, compared to that of the emperor. The Moldavian prince accepted the arbitrage but, whilst waiting for the peaceful resolution of the situation, prince Dan II and the Ottomans had attacked

199 Minea, *Politica orientală*, 195–196.

200 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 841–842.

201 “Eciam scribit nobis waywoda Maldavie, quomodo iste Dan woywoda Bessarabie cum quibusdam Turcis, receptis sibi in subsidium, irrui in bona ipsius, que sunt circa castrum Kylia; et recepto spolio et dampnis magnis factis recedere voluit, sed Walachi insequentes eos plures gladio prostraverunt, alii autem in fuga conversi sunt; et sic supplicat nobis woyewoda, ut interponeremus vices nostras pro eo et quod scriberemus regi Hungarie, ut dampna illata woyewode Walachorum faceret restituere et pro eis satisfacere, ut ex copia ipsius V. F. clarius deducetur” (A. Lewicki (ed.), *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti III*, (Krakow, 1894), 503).

202 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 847 and 860.

203 “De Moldwano autem etc, scripseramus V. F. prius prout actenus fama pervenit. Sed demum bene percepimus ipsum adhuc agere in humanis et clare intelleximus informationem quam nobis de dispositione inter ipsum Moldwanum et Thartarorum imperatorem descripsistis. Eciam de quam paravit cum Turcis quam pocius credimus perpetuam quam temporalem” (Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 915).

Moldavia. Sigismund was informed about the great danger represented by the action of the Wallachian prince, but failed to offer an answer.²⁰⁴ In these circumstances, it became impossible for Sigismund to demand the arbitrage, because the military action started by his vassal together with the Ottomans had compromised any chance of obtaining Kilia peacefully. Witold's role as arbiter ended there.

Witold's crowning failed as well, his efforts undermined by Poland. Sigismund's emissaries who were heading toward Lithuania with the coronation charter were robbed of all their documents. Jagiello and Witold agreed in a meeting that the grand duke would try to obtain the crown from the pope and that the crown would go to Jagiello after Witold's death.²⁰⁵ In October 1430, after an accident, Witold died, and his dream of being crowned king never came true. His death did not end the Polish-Lithuanian hostilities. On the contrary, under Swidrygiello's rule an opened military conflict with Poland started, with the grand duke having the Tartars, the Teutonic Order, the Hussites, and Moldavia on his side.²⁰⁶ King Sigismund's support for Swidrygiello and the political reorientation of the Moldavian prince modified radically the relation of forces in the northwestern Black Sea region. Kilia was no longer a reason for political tension.²⁰⁷ Under these new circumstances, it was the king of Poland who suggested, in October 1431, the division of Moldavia according to the treaty of Lubowla,²⁰⁸ and it was the Sigismund's turn to refuse the offer.

204 "Item quomodo ex prefati domini magni ducis decreto woyewoda Moldavie stante termino huiusmodi arbitrii deberet esse in pacifica et quieta possessione, predicti castri Kylya et terrarum ut prefertur per ipsum possessarum, tamen woyewoda Dan Bessarabie, adunatis sibi exercitibus gencium Bessarabiorum et nonnullorum Turkorum, invasit hostiliter terras predicti woyewode Moldavie; primo, per unum exercitum et secundo per per quator partes divisum, incendia dampna et depopulacionem ibidem faciendo, super quibus omnibus dominus Romanorum et Hungarie rex per dominum nostrum regem fraterne fuit avisatus cum requisicione et petitione, ut provideret, ne talia per suum woyewodam fierent quodque ipsorum contencio non daret occasionem moiorem periculis atque dampnis. Super quo et hactenus dominus noster rex nullum recepit a domino Romanorum regi effectuosum responsum" (Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 910).

205 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 83.

206 A. Lewicki, *Powstanie Swidrygielly. Ustep z dziejów unii Litwy z korona*, (Krakow, 1892), 67–166.

207 Papacostea, "Kilia et la politique orientale": 432.

208 Górka, "Zagadnienie czarnomorskie", 370.

Schismatics, Heretics and Crusaders

An important component of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict was the religious one: Witold's brother, Sigismund Kiestut, the grand duke supported by Poland, was counting on the aid of the Catholic nobility, while Swidrygiello was counting on the Greek-Orthodox boyars from the Russian territories of the Lithuanian state, whose status was different from the Catholic nobles'. In 1429, at Luck, Sigismund of Luxembourg proposed to organise a council to reform the Church and to carry out the religious union based on equality between the Latin and the Eastern rites.²⁰⁹ According to Dlugosz, the emperor agreed to the equality between the Latin and Greek sacerdotium, and the fact that the latter wore beards and had wives did not make them any inferior because, unlike the Catholic clerics, they made do with one woman, while the Latins made do with ten. For this reason, Sigismund gained a high prestige among the Ruthenians because they interpreted the emperor's words as an admission of the Greek rite superiority over the Latin one.²¹⁰ The spectacular declaration of the monarch contributed decisively to the triggering of the "Greek-Orthodox riot" led by Swidrygiello,²¹¹ to which the prince of Moldavia also rallied. In early 1431, alliance treaties were signed with Novgorod and Pskov.²¹² The connection between Swidrygiello and Alexander of Moldavia was close and was to be strengthened even more by a matrimonial alliance about which, at the end of 1430, Sigismund of Luxembourg was informed.²¹³ Dlugosz asserted that the alliance between the two rulers was based on the affection they shared for the Greek rite,²¹⁴ but at this point the chronicler was reflecting the opinion of his mentor, the bishop Zbigniew Olesnicki.

Early in 1432, in a letter addressed to Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, bishop Olesnicki offered an excuse for his absence from the Council of Basel, namely the insurgence of Swidrygiello, who in alliance with the Ruthenians, Teutonic Knights, Moldavians and Hussites were endangering the Kingdom of Poland and the Catholic faith. According to the bishop of Krakow, Swidrygiello, concluded

209 Márta Kondor, "Latin West and Byzantine East at the Dawn of the Renaissance: Emperor Sigismund and the Union with the Greeks", *Infima Aetas Pannonica: Studies in Late Medieval Hungarian History*, (eds.) Péter E. Kovács and Kornél Szovák (Budapest, 2010), 79–96.

210 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 555.

211 Ciocâltan, "Înțelesul politic al « minunii » Sfântului Nicodim de la Tismana": 157–158.

212 Lewicki, *Powstanie Swidrygielly*, 80–81.

213 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 955.

214 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 596.

a secret understanding with the schismatic nobles and princes while Witold was still alive, offering them political positions in exchange of their support. Moreover, he allied with the powerful schismatic prince of Moldavia and the latter, although he was the king's vassal, avoided obeisance and allied with the Turks against the king and the Catholic faith. Furthermore, he supported the heretical Hussites and allowed them to preach freely throughout his country, to the profound discontent of the Catholic bishop of Moldavia.²¹⁵

The accusations of the bishop of Krakow reflect his intention to present the king of Poland as fighting with all the enemies of the Catholic faith: heretics, schismatic, or Muslims. Nevertheless, they have a basis in reality confirmed by other sources. While in Poland a debate between the theologians from the University of Krakow and the adepts of Hussitism took place in 1431, ending with the Catholics' clear victory,²¹⁶ in Moldavia the prince organised a similar debate, where the Hussite leader was the victor.²¹⁷ Owing to the prince's tolerant attitude, Moldavia became an important centre of Hussitism, and the winner of the theological disputation, Iacob of Molda, former student at the University of Prague, gathered around him a group of priests and believers

215 "Traxerat nempe predictus dux Switrigal ad se secreta, adhuc vivente illo victorioso principe duce magno Withowdo, omnel fere illos scismaticos principes et nobiles favoribus multis, quos ille strictissima cohercione sibi subiecerat, ex maxime promittendo eis, si eorum auxilio hunc statum in quo nunc est nancisceretur, velle eorum ritum extollere et eorum consiliiis regi; timent igitur scismatici, quod si concordia inter istos fratres fieret in prioribus punctis, ne eos subici oporteat catholicis sicut prius. Est eciam cum duce predicto Switrigal et Ruthenis in liga quidam woyewoda Moldawie alias Walachie de Moldawia, potens scismaticus, omagialis et subditus regis nostri et regni, quem eciam novissime predictus dux ab obediencia domini regis abstraxit promissis suis vanis et signanter, quod velit sectam et ritum eorum extollere, qui eciam dominum regem nostrum diffidavit, non habens aliam causam, preterquam quod dicit ipsum dominum nostrum regem et suos velle eorum destruere; et hic univit se eciam cum Thurcis, quibus confirmavit dominia sua hac intencione, ut potencior si ad resistendum domino rege nostro; et quod periculosius est, admisit in dominio suo quendam sacerdotem religiosum de ordine Minorum sectam Hussitarum publice predicare et docere, et hic seduxit iam maximam partem plebis et vadit per campestria habens maximam sequelam populi et turbarum, docens eos et exercitus ducere et modos omnes tenere, qui ab hereticis Bohemie observantur. Iamque Catholicum episcopum et fideles populos exosos et despectos reddidit et facit predicto woyewode et contra eos insurgit, sicut de hoc predictus episcopus catholicus, qui est suffraganeus domini archiepiscopi Leopoliensis de Russia, scripsit nobis, petens et auxilia et consilia nostra in hoc facto" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris II*, 290).

216 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 577–578.

217 Papacostea, *Evul Mediu românesc*, 281–287.

who remained faithful to the Hussite ideas to the end of the fifteenth century.²¹⁸ Summoned by the king of Poland to put an end to the anti-Catholic policy, the Moldavian prince ignored the warning and even restricted the usage of Latin in his country.²¹⁹

Documents are less clear about the connection between Alexander and the Ottomans. In the context of the fights between the Moldavian ruler and Dan II, Sigismund stated in the summer of 1430 that Alexander had concluded peace with the Turks. In the spring of 1431, the prince of Moldavia succeeded in imposing Alexander Aldea on the throne of Wallachia, enabling him to start a new anti-Ottoman campaign in June 1431, which ended with the victory of the Moldavian-Wallachian army.²²⁰

A letter sent from Ragusa to Sigismund of Luxemburg in July 1432 summarised the sequence of the fights, then mentioned that the prince of Wallachia, vassal to the king of Hungary, went to sultan Murad and bowed to him.²²¹ It seems that Alexander Aldea's bowing to the sultan involved also his protector, the prince of Moldavia, as it is suggested in a letter of the prince of Wallachia addressed to the count of Temeswar, Stephen Rozgonyi, sent before the Ottoman campaign from the summer of 1432. Alexander Aldea announced that the sultan was preparing a campaign in Transylvania, that he would accompany the Ottoman army, and that the sultan asked the same thing from the prince of Moldavia. Nevertheless, Alexander Aldea declared that he was ready to betray the Turks at the moment of the fight and claimed that the prince of Moldavia also was on King Sigismund's side.²²² Alexander Aldea was asking the count to send Murad David Celebi, a candidate to the Ottoman throne who

218 Joseph Macek, *Jean Huss et les traditions hussites*, (Plon, 1973), 229–230.

219 Șerban Papacostea, "Moldova și unirea bisericilor din Apus și Răsărit. Vremea lui Alexandru cel Bun", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 31 (2013): 22–23.

220 Gündisch, "Die Türkeneinfälle in Siebenbürgen": 402–403; Andreescu, "Trois actes de Génes": 41.

221 Gelcich József and Thallóczy Lajos (eds.), *Ragusa és Magyarország összeköttetéseinek oklevéltára*, (Budapest, 1887), 374: "Dominus Vlachorum, prout alias corone vestre deteximus, fui ad portam dicti domini Omorat Teucer et se suo subiecit dominio ac cum gentibus suis fertur fuisse cum dicto Teucrorum exercitum".

222 Ovidiu Cristea, "The Friend of My Friend and the Enemy of My Enemy: Romanian Participation in Ottoman Campaigns", in Gábor Kármán, Lovro Kunčević (eds.), *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (Leiden-Boston, 2013), 253–274. As the document is undated it is difficult to establish the identity of the lord of Moldavia see Maria Magdalena Székely, Ștefan S. Gorovei, "Autour des realtions moldo-ottomanes", *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe*, 5(2013), 161 n. 38.

had taken refuge in Hungary, saying that he could convince several Ottoman chieftains to join the candidate who was supported by the Hungarians.²²³

It is very likely that, while he was at war with Poland, the prince of Moldavia concluded peace with the sultan through the agency of the prince of Wallachia, thus securing the southern border. Therefore, Bishop Olesnicki's accusation was not a fabrication but it should be underlined that the agreement between the prince of Moldavia and the Ottomans was signed with Sigismund of Luxembourg's knowledge. One may add also that the Moldo-Ottoman relations were a topic discussed during the negotiations between Sigismund and Swidrygiello.²²⁴

The works of the Council of Basel and the discussions about the religious union influenced the Polish-Lithuanian conflict. Magister Johann Pulchripatis, the council's envoy to the pope, was instructed to send a message to the Byzantine emperor, asking him to send envoys to discuss the religious union. Other messages were to be directed to the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, concerning the Greek-Orthodox subjects in their territories.²²⁵ In a letter to the pope from 1432, Wladislas Jagiello expressed his support and enthusiasm for religious union, stating that he had discussed with the Byzantine emperor and the ecumenical patriarch and that Metropolitan Gerasimos promoted the union in his territories.²²⁶ Gerasimos, metropolitan of Kiev and of all Russia, had previously been bishop of Smolensk and had become

223 I. Bogdan (ed.), *Documente privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul și cu Țara Ungurească în secolele XV și XVI*, 1, Bucharest, 1905, 51–52.

224 Prochaska, *Codex epistolaris Vitoldi*, 955.

225 Johann Haller (ed.), *Concilium Basiliense. Die Protokolle des Concils 1431–1433*, (Basel, 1897), 550: "Item quod dignebatur scribere imperatori Grecorum, eum incitando ut veniat vel mittat ad dictum concilium pro unione tractanda. Idem scribat regi Polonie et magno duci Litphanie, quod laboret ad reducendum Ruthenos et quod mittand ad concilium".

226 Edward Raczynski (ed.), *Kodex dyplomatyczny Litwy*, (Wroclaw, 1845), 366: "Cupimus Reuerendissimis patribus vestris notum fieret quod nos receptis primis litteris uestris Reverendissimis patribus cum dicta Reuerencia dudum eosdem Imperatorem et patriarcha Constantinopolitanum necnon et Erasmus Metropolitanum generalem omnium terrarum Russie multa sollicitudine ausauimis prout et exnunc iterum ad ipsos Imperatorem et Patriarcham Constantinopolitanum misimus litteras et nuncios nostros diligencius adhortando ut ad hauc sanctissimam unionem mentibus et corde uehementius aspirarent terrarum quoque nostrarum subditos spirituales et seculares ad hanc unionem sanctam adhortando induximus qui ad ipsam unionem sanctam tota mente auhelant et super eo dirigunt patriarchas Constantinopolitano sua scripta ad eandem santam unionem ipsum incitande et an incomitua ipsius patriarche uel pro se suos Ambasiatores ad sacrum Concilium destinare debeant ipsum requirendo".

metropolitan with Swidrygiello's aid.²²⁷ The political context was difficult for the Greek-Orthodox bishop, who was forced to choose between Swidrygiello, a faithful Greek-Orthodox Christian, and King Wladislas, supporter of the religious union. Gerasimos chose to side with Wladislas. In a letter from June 1432, Jagiello complained to the pope about the difficulties he was facing whilst seeking the religious union, especially from the bishop of Vilna, naming him his enemy. Wladislas mentioned that the bishop carrying the papal letters was held by the prince of Moldavia, who had the audacity to unseal the papal bull addressed to metropolitan Gerasimos and after seeing that the pope wrote only about the union then gave the document back to the emissary.²²⁸

It is not clear whether the prince of Moldavia informed Swidrygiello about Metropolitan Gerasimos's actions but, given the alliance between the two, it is very likely. The subsequent events show that Swidrygiello sought to counter-balance Poland's advantage in the matter between the Greek-Orthodox and Catholics, demanding to have his own representative at the Council of Basel. In March 1433, Swidrygiello's followers addressed the council, accusing Sigismund Kiestut's infamous acts and the ill will of the Polish. They made assurances that Swidrygiello remained faithful to the Catholic Church and that the dialogue between the Greek-Orthodox and the Catholics could not take place in their absence.²²⁹ Although this gesture limited to enunciating the harmony between the Greek-Orthodox and the Catholics, in the letter to the Council from June 1433, Swidrygiello asserted bluntly that he can convince the Russians of accepting the union with the Catholic Church.²³⁰ Metropolitan Gerasimos is not

227 E. Голубински, *Исторія Русской Церкви*, II/1, (Moscow, 1900), 418.

228 Raczynski, *Kodex dyplomatyczny Litwy*, 364. For the Polish-Moldavian relations in 1433–1434 i.e. the first two years after the death of prince Alexander see Ioan-Aurel Pop, Adinel-Ciprian Dincă, “Témoignages sur les relations de suzeraineté-vassalité polono-moldaves à la fin du règne du premier roi Jagellon” in *Between Worlds. The Age of the Jagiellonians*, ed. by Florin Ardelean, Christopher Nicholson and Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 157–176.

229 E. Martene and U. Durand (eds.), *Vetera scriptorum et monumentorum, historicorum, dogmaticorum, moralium, amplissima collectio*, VIII, (Paris, 1733), 576: “Nihilominus si possit haberi saluus conductus per terras et loca aliorum principum et dominiorum, ad hoc sacrum concilium parati sumus pro justitia domini nostri consequenda venire, et hujus sacri concilii determinationi stare, et Deum deprecamur ex corde optantes, quod seniores fidei nostre, que est de ritu Graecorum, et fide ecclesiae Romanae, vobiscum concordat, quo facto, et nos parati sumus stare et obedire concordant”.

230 “Postremo paenominatus dominus L. pro parte V. P. a nobis pia et deprecativa exhortatione exigebat, quatenus mitibus sagacibusque viis, modis et blandis persuasionibus fideliter alliceremus et induceremus principes, duces et seniores Ruthenorum ad unionem

mentioned in the two documents, a fact which shows that Swidrygiello's religious policy was independent of the Greek-Orthodox metropolitan. Gerasimos was an adept of Swidrygiello's rival, Sigismund Kiestut. At the beginning of 1435, at Swidrygiello's order, the metropolitan was burned at the stake,²³¹ a punishment which was usually reserved for heretics and those accused of sodomy.

cum sancta Romana ecclesia, signanter ut ambassiatores super ritibus eorum et industria expertos, ad hanc sanctam synodum generalem concilii Basileensis dirigere procurarent" (Martene and Durand, *Vetera scriptorum*, VIII, 623).

²³¹ Oscar Halecki, *From Florence to Brest (1439-1596)*, (Rome, 1958), 39-40.

The Union of Florence, Crusade and Ottoman Hegemony in the Black Sea

The fourth crusade had accentuated the breach between Byzantines and Western Europe despite the efforts of the popes and emperors to put an end to the schism. The mutual distrust and the different politics objectives have undermined all the attempts of union between East and West.¹ The Ottoman threat was an important topic in the negotiations about the union, from the end of the fourteenth and in the first half of the fifteenth century. As the Byzantine empire was unable to contain the Ottoman expansion, Emperor Manuel II travelled to Western courts in an attempt to gain military support but the deliverance of his capital was eventually due to Ottomans' defeat at Ankara and the ensuing struggle for power between Bayezid I's sons.² Manuel's successor, Emperor John VIII continued the quest for Western support and suggested that the Church Union should be discussed by a council of both Latin and Greek clergy. The idea was well received by Pope Eugenius IV who saw the event as an opportunity to gain prestige and strengthening his position in his dispute with the Council of Basel.³ The Council of Ferrara-Florence was organised in close connection with the anti-Ottoman crusade but its success proved to be very fragile.

Despite their traditional roles, the pope and the Byzantine emperor did not dispose of the instruments to compel their subjects to accept the Union. The Pope was confronted by a serious opposition gathered around the council of Basel, while in the Byzantine territories the decision encountered resistance, even hostility. Moreover, the emperor had no authority to impose the Union outside the empire, in other Greek-Orthodox countries. Although a Byzantine delegation went to Basel in 1434, claiming that the Patriarch of Constantinople had under his control not only the Byzantine territories but also the realms of Albania, Georgia, Trebizond, Crimea, Wallachia, Moldavia and Russia, the

1 Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East and Latin West: Two Worlds of Christendom in Middle Ages and Renaissance* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 84–86.

2 Nevra Necipoglu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18.

3 John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1996), 51.

reality was quite different.⁴ Constantinople's authority over these territories was rather symbolical and should not be confounded with the pope's jurisdiction in the West. The only prerogative of Constantinople consisted in the appointment of the metropolitans but, even in such case, there were sometimes serious clashes between the Patriarchy and the local rulers. Sometimes, as in the Moldavian case, the lords imposed their own candidates as metropolitans, thus defying the patriarch's and the emperor's authority. In those circumstances, the decisions of the Council of Florence had little chances to be embraced by realms which had already took their distance from the Byzantine empire. This rejection of the Florentine Union had crucial and long-lasting consequences particularly in Central-Eastern Europe.

The new appointed metropolitan of Kiev continued Gerasimos's policy of religious union but he was a Greek, and therefore saw things from the Byzantine point of view, not fully considering the political reality of Eastern Europe. In 1434, Isidor, the prior of the monastery St. Demetrios of Constantinople, joined the Byzantine delegation which went to Basel,⁵ and in 1436 he was appointed metropolitan of Kiev and of entire Russia. Isidor's appointment and that of metropolitan Damian for Moldavia were part of the Byzantine preparations for the Council: both were sent to their eparchies to return with a lay deputation until the arrival of the council's ships.⁶ The destination was still unknown to them and the Byzantine delegates had to choose between the ships of the council and those of the pope while arguing with one another. After a first unsuccessful attempt to dissolve the council, late in 1431,⁷ Pope Eugene IV tried to find a technicality to end the sessions of the Council and was successful in early 1438 in transferring the council to Ferrara. The pope's controversial move against the council was compared by an important supporter of the conciliar movement with Lucifer's rebellion.⁸ It caused a huge dispute within the Catholic Church, which lasted an entire decade and which, for a while, appeared to lead to a new schism.⁹ The polarization of the Catholic world between the pope and the

4 Eugenio Cecconi, *Studi storici sul Concilio di Firenze*, I (Firenze, 1869), LXXXVI.

5 Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence*, (Cambridge University Press, 1959), 54–55.

6 Vitalien Laurent (ed.), *Les « memoires » du grand ecclésiarque de l'Église de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le Concile de Florence (1438–1439)*, (Rome, 1971), 162–163 and 596–597.

7 Loy Bilderback, "Eugene IV and the First Dissolution of the Council of Basle", *Church History*, 36 (1967), 3: 243–253.

8 Jesse D. Mann, "The Devilish Pope: Eugenius IV as Lucifer in the Later Works of Juan de Segovia", *Church History*, 65 (1996), 2: 186–196.

9 Joachim W. Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV, the Council of Basel and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1978), 44–56.

conciliar movement had a significant impact throughout the European continent and crucial consequences for the future of the religious union.

Eventually, the Greeks chose the ships of the pope. On 6 July 1439, after lengthy debates, the agreement of the religious union was signed in Florence. While this agreement had been considered as a prerequisite for any large action against the enemy of Christendom, the bulla *Laetentur caeli* made the Catholics even more suspicious of the “schismatics” just as the Greek-Orthodox continued to hold their rite superior to the Latin one.¹⁰ At the invitation of Venetian officials, the Greek metropolitans celebrated an Orthodox liturgy in San Marco cathedral before leaving Italy. No Catholic priest participated to the divine service, the Credo was delivered without *filioque*, and the name of the pope was not mentioned.¹¹ The members of the Byzantine delegation, including the emperor, did not have many reasons for joy. They were suspicious of the sincerity of the Latins and the intellectual battle around the Union started soon.¹² The union of Florence accomplished solely the dogmatic reconciliation between the Eastern and the Western Churches, but not a political one, which would have offered help against the Turks to the Byzantine emperor. The absolute majority of secular and ecclesiastical authorities north of the Alps, except for Burgundy and England, rejected the pope’s attempt to transfer the council. Given that many of the Catholic rulers refused to send their representatives to Florence, most of them openly supporting the Council of Basel,¹³ the chances of obtaining support for the Byzantines relied exclusively on Eugene IV’s attempt to impose his authority. Moreover, because the union agreement had clearly confirmed the pope’s position as head of the universal Church, annulling thereby the independence of the Eastern Church,¹⁴ the Byzantines were in schism with that part of the Catholic Church which remained faithful to the Council of Basel. Even before the proclamation of the union, the emissaries from Basel took the offensive. In the session of 25 June 1439, the Council of Basel declared “Gabriel, former pope, under the name of Eugene IV” a

10 Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 305–410.

11 Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice*, (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 379.

12 Ihor Ševčenko, “Intellectual Repercussions of the Council of Florence”, *Church History*, 24 (1955), 4: 291–323; Charalambos Dendrinou, “Reflections on the Failure of the Union of Florence”, *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum*, 39 (2007), 1–2: 131–148.

13 M. Creighton and D. D. Oxon, *A History of the Papacy from the Great Schism to the Sack of Rome*, III, (London, 1911), 3–45.

14 Deno J. Geanakoplos, “The Council of Florence (1438–1439) and the Problem of Union between the Greek and Latin Churches”, *Church History*, 24 (1955), 4: 334; Martin Anton Schmidt, “The Problem of Papal Primacy at the Council of Florence”, *Church History*, 30 (1961), 1: 35–49.

“schismatic” and “apostate of faith.”¹⁵ Unable to secure powerful support from the Western kingdoms, Eugene IV headed toward Eastern Europe, hoping that Ottoman pressure from the Balkans would convince the kingdoms of Hungary and, especially, Poland to become his allies.¹⁶

The situation in the region was tense. Hungary’s and Poland’s willingness to join the battle against the Ottomans was far from the Pope’s expectations. Poland had already refused to send delegates to Ferrara-Florence, although Eugene IV had approached the archbishop of Gnezno on this matter twice.¹⁷ A great part of the Polish clergy, especially those associated with the University of Krakow, who exercised a strong influence on the bishops had decided to follow the decisions of the Council of Basel.¹⁸ The deaths of Wladislas Jagiello (1434) and of Sigismund of Luxembourg (1437) rekindled the enmity between the two kingdoms, which the compromise of Lubowla did not quench entirely. In this context, the religious union and the fight against the Ottomans had become secondary issues. The situation deteriorated especially after the crowning of Casimir Jagiello in May 1438, as king of Bohemia, to the detriment of Albert of Habsburg, Sigismund of Luxembourg’s successor in Hungary and Bohemia, although Albert had obtained the pope’s support and also that of the Council of Basel. The presence of the two Jagiellons on the thrones of Poland and Bohemia had serious implications for the latter and for Hungary. In October 1438, the plan for a new commercial road to connect Bohemia through Poland and Moldavia with Kilia and Caffa was drawn up.¹⁹ The plan was not carried out because in early 1439 the emissaries of the pope and the Council of Basel signed a truce. The Jagiellons were giving up Bohemia, and the question of Ruthenia and Moldavia was postponed for twelve years. In May 1439, Zbigniew Olesnicki tried to negotiate a new treaty with King Albert II at Lubowla concerning Lithuania, Ruthenia, and Moldavia while offering more favourable terms for Poland.²⁰ One of the drafts of the treaty stipulated that the king of Hungary was to confirm the Polish king’s domination over Ruthenia

15 Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 55.

16 Thaddeus V. Tuleja, “Eugenius IV and the Crusade of Varna”, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 35 (1949), 3: 259–260.

17 Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*, 48.

18 Tomasz Graff, “Katolicki episkopat Metropolii Gnieźnieńskiej i Lwowskiej wobec wyboru pseudopapieża Feliksa V przez Sobór Bazylejski”, *Nasza Przeszłość*, 99 (2003): 55–129.

19 Gustav Beckmann (ed.), *Deutsche Reichstagsakten König Albrecht II*, 1/2, (Gotha, 1916), 712; Papacostea, “Kilia et la politique orientale”, 432.

20 Biskup, “Polish Diplomacy”, 93–94.

and Moldavia without any impediment from King Albert II and his lieges,²¹ but this never came about.

The coincidence of the Polish diplomatic actions and the Ottoman attacks against Transylvania²² made Albert II suspect an agreement between the Polish and the Ottomans.²³ A letter of the Polish nobility to King Albert II, reveal that the political elite of the realm had heard from the Moldavian prince about the Turkish invasion of Hungary, and that kings Wladislas and Casimir were ready to offer help against the Ottomans. In September 1438, the Hungarian nobles wrote to King Wladislas urging him to refuse the offer and accusing him of paving the way for the Ottoman invasion into Bohemia.²⁴ In 1429, the Ottomans unleashed a new attack and conquered the fortress Smederevo, the capital of the Serbian state ruled by George Branković.²⁵

Toward the end of the year, an emissary of the sultan went to Krakow and offered important gifts to the Polish king. Sultan Murad proposed an alliance against Hungary, with ready money and 100,000 soldiers. In the context of the Hungarian claims to Ruthenia, Podolia and Moldavia, the offer was tempting, but the death of King Albert II prevented any concrete action.²⁶ In the following year, Wladislas was elected king of Hungary, which completely changed the chances of a Polish-Ottoman alliance. When Wladislas took the crown of Hungary, the two kingdoms became united against the Turks and the Tartars. As a result, Hungary renounced its claims to Ruthenia, Podolia and Moldavia.²⁷

The Fail of the Union in Eastern Europe

In September 1439, the pope appointed Metropolitan Isidor legate *a latere* for Lithuania, Livonia, Russia and Poland.²⁸ Isidor arrived in Hungary in the spring of 1440. From Buda, he sent a circular letter to the Serbians, Russians and

21 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris II*, 399–400.

22 Gündisch, “Die Türkeneinfälle in Siebenbürgen”: 404–406.

23 Martin Chasin, “The Crusade of Varna”, *History of the Crusades*, VI, ed. Keneth S. Setton, (Wisconsin, 1989), 284–285.

24 A. Sokolowski and. J. Szujzki (eds.), *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti I*, (Krakow, 1876), 89–93.

25 Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, 530.

26 Stachon, *Polityka Polski wobec Turcyi*, 92–93.

27 Jan Dabrowski, “La Pologne et l’expédition de Varna en 1444”, *Revue des Études Slaves*, 10 (1930), 1–2: 59.

28 Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, II, 41.

Wallachians, sharing the news of the religious union and of its consequences.²⁹ In Poland, Isidor was received by the bishop of Krakow. An astute diplomat, Zbigniew Olesnicki allowed the cardinal of Russia to celebrate the Mass in the cathedral of Krakow according to the Eastern rite and to proclaim the union.³⁰ Olesnicki's gesture did not indicate his acceptance of to the religious union, but was prompted by the "neutrality" adopted by the Polish clergy whilst trying to avoid a new schism within the Catholic Church. Olesnicki received the cardinal's hat from Eugene IV, and he also accepted the one sent by the anti-pope Felix V. Wicentius Kot, Achbishop of Gnezno, did the same, but the red hat sent by the anti-pope was retired in 1447.³¹

Other Polish bishops, less diplomatic than Olesnicki, showed their open support of the Council of Basel during cardinal Isidor's visit. The case of the bishop of Vilna, appointed by the representatives from Basel, is well-known. According to reports received in Basel, Isidor, alleged cardinal and legate of the pope, asked the Catholic bishop's permission to officiate the Mass in his cathedral according to the Eastern rite, to proclaim thereby the union accomplished at the Council of Florence. The bishop answered that he had never heard of a council other than the one from Basel and that he could not accept his request, because Eugene, whose legate he considered him to be, had been condemned by the Council of Basel.³² This is an example of the manner in which the high Catholic clergy related to the religious union. By declaring that he had never heard of another council than the one of Basel, the bishop of Vilna was denying the juridical signification of the Florentine Union, thus treating Isidor as schismatic. In February 1442, under the influence of Bishop Mathew, the grand duke of Lithuania, Casimir Jagiello, adhered to the Council of Basel.³³ Casimir Jagiello's attachment to the Lithuanian tradition compromised the chances of a union between the Catholics and the Greek-Orthodox in Lithuania.³⁴

In Ruthenia, Isidor received a similar treatment. The archbishop of Lwow, member of the powerful Odrowaz family³⁵ and an intimate of the queen-mother, Sophia Holszanski, denied the cardinal permission to celebrate mass

29 M. Harasiewicz, *Annales Ecclesiae Rutheniae*, (Lwow, 1862), 77.

30 Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*, 56–57.

31 Graff, "Katolicki episkopat": 128–129.

32 A. Lewicki, "Unia Florencka w Polsce", *Rosprawy Akademii Umiejetnosci. Wydzial Historyczno-Filozoficzny*, s. II, XVIII (1899): 235.

33 Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*, 64.

34 S. C. Rowell, "Casimir Jagiellończyk and the Polish gamble, 1445–7", *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 4 (1999): 38.

35 Karol Górski, "Ród Odrowazów w wieckach średnich", *Rocznik polskiego towarzystwa heraldycznego we Lwowie*, XVIII (1926–1927): 97–99.

in the Lwow cathedral, and he refused to accept the Council of Florence and the religious union it had proclaimed.³⁶ In August 1441, the Council of Basel granted Jan Odrowaz generous spiritual and jurisdictional privileges,³⁷ and in February 1442 named him legate of the Council on behalf of Poland, Lithuania, Russia and Moldavia.³⁸ Furthermore, the Council of Basel also named Odrowaz Patriarch of Constantinople, but the title was rather symbolic and it is unlikely that the possibility of influencing the Greek-Orthodox population to accept his jurisdiction ever existed. On the contrary, Odrowaz's appointment, albeit honorary, intensified their hostility against the Latins.³⁹

Because of the tight connections between the Odrowaz family and the prince of Moldavia, including the jurisdictional subordination of Moldavia's Catholic bishop to the archbishopric of Lwow and of Moldavia following Poland's foreign policy, the religious union in Moldavia was practically void. In the case of this country, the union would have given an advantage to the Catholic clergy, which had an inferior status compared to the Greek-Orthodox one.⁴⁰ Finally, in March 1441, Cardinal Isidor arrived in Moscow where, after proclaiming the union, he was imprisoned. He managed to escape, probably with the knowledge and consent of the Muscovite authorities.⁴¹ His flight opened the path for Bishop Iona of Ryazan, whose previous nomination as metropolitan was refused twice by Bizantium.⁴²

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- 36 Irena Sulkowska-Kuras and Stanislaw Kuras (eds.), *Bullarium Poloniae*, VI (1447–1464), (Rome, 1988), 37: “Et sic coacti et gravati capitulum iamdictum videntes eundem archiepiscopum uti contra eos litteris antipapae et sic adhaerere concilio, cuius legatus assertus, ut praedicatur, fuit, fungens etiam officio patriarchatus in partibus Russiae, idcirco et reverendissimum in Christo patrem d. Ysidorum metropolitanum Graecorum venientem de Curia Romana ad divina celebranda in eccl. Leopoliensi admittere noluit, nisi prius profiteretur auctoritatem concilii et decreta illius promitteret tenere”.
- 37 *Akta grodzkie i ziemskie z czasów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z archiwum tak zwanego bernardyńskiego we Lwowie*, IV, (Lwow, 1873), 147–150.
- 38 E. Janota, *Monografia opactwa cystersów we wsi Mogiła. Część II*, (Krakow, 1867), 115: “Dei gratia s. Leopoliensis ecclesiae archiepiscopus et a sacrosanta generali synodo Basiliensi ... ac sanctissimo domino nostro, domino Felice, divina providentia papa quinto, nuntius per inclitum regnum Poloniae, Russiae, Podoliae, Lithuaniae, Wallachiae, etc. specialiter deputatus”.
- 39 Tomasz Graff, *Episkopat monarchii jagiellońskiej w dobie soborów powszechnych XV wieku*, (Kraków, 2008), 297.
- 40 Liviu Pilat, “Moldavia between the Union of Florence and the reaction of Council of Basel”, *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Eastern and Central Europe*, 111 (2011): 65–86.
- 41 Michael Cherniavsky, “The Reception of the Council of Florence in Moscow”, *Church History*, 24 (1955), 4: 348–359.
- 42 Gustave Alef, “Muscovy and the Council of Florence”, *Slavic Review*, xx (1961), 3: 394–401.

Crusade Plans and Political Contradictions

Meanwhile, Pope Eugene IV sent Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini to Hungary with three major objectives: to make peace between King Wladislas and the Habsburgs, to prepare the crusade against the Turks under Wladislas's leadership, and to put an end to the schism between the followers of the pope and those of the Council of Basel.⁴³ Taking advantage of the civil war in Hungary, the Ottomans attacked Belgrade.⁴⁴ In 1442, they launched a campaign in Transylvania, which ended with the victory of the voivode of Transylvania, John Hunyadi, lifting the morale among the Christians.⁴⁵

In 1442, negotiations between Cesarini, Olesnicki and Queen Elisabeth's ambassadors ended with the signing of a treaty in Bratislava. The right to the throne of the Habsburgs was recognised, and Wladislas was to take the throne of Hungary as regent until Ladislaus the Posthumous turned 15. In exchange for this compromise, the Kingdom of Hungary was renouncing any claims to Ruthenia, Podolia, and Moldavia in the benefit of Poland. In order to be put into effect, the treaty had to be ratified by the diet of Hungary. The Hungarian nobles, however, rejected the proposition,⁴⁶ and reasserted the kingdom's rights over Ruthenia and Moldavia.⁴⁷ Consequently, in December 1442, Cesarini mediated a new treaty in Győr, which did not include the clauses on Silesia, Ruthenia, and Moldavia stipulated in the previous treaty, favourable to Poland. King Wladislas lacked the necessary might and experience to oppose papal diplomacy, and, consequently, Poland did not support the expedition of 1443 against the Ottomans.⁴⁸

The pope's emissaries were mandated to enlarge the anti-Ottoman coalition by drawing in the Greek-Orthodox states from the East, in accordance with the precepts of the religious union. The context was favourable for organizing a crusade, and the idea that the Ottomans could be banished from Europe gained more and more followers.⁴⁹ In 1442, Eugene IV sent the bishop of Corona, Cristoforo Garatone, to Hungary, with the mission to compel the

43 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, I, 768.

44 Chasin, "The Crusade of Varna", 286–287.

45 Tamás Pálosfalvi, "Az 1442. márciusi török hadjárat. Adalékok Hunyadi János első törököl- lenes harcaihoz", *Történelmi Szemle*, 43 (2001), 1–2: 48–54.

46 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 96.

47 Lewicki, *Index actorum*, no. 2395.

48 Dabrowski, "La Pologne et l'expédition de Varna en 1444": 65.

49 Francisc Pall, "Ciriaco d' Ancona e la Crociata contri i Turchi", *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique*, xx (1938): 21–25.

rulers of Moldavia, Wallachia, Lithuania and Albania to stand together against the common enemy.⁵⁰ In the same year, the pope sent Denis of Ilok, from the Observant Franciscan Vicarage of Bosnia, as commissary to the Scythian and Moldavian parts.⁵¹ Faithful followers of the pope, the observants of Bosnia benefited from a generous expansion of their area of jurisdiction. John of Capistrano made them well-know for their strong anti-Ottoman stance.⁵²

In March 1443, King Wladislas issued a diploma which advocated the Union of Florence, stating the equality between the Catholic and the Greek-Orthodox clergy; his decision was not well received by the Catholic clergy from Poland.⁵³ At the same time, action was taken to bring the supporters of the Council of Basel back under the pope's authority. Through the agency of Cardinal Cesarini, the archbishop of Lwow received forgiveness from the pope, but only after he renounced the offices he had received from the Council.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, these moves were insufficient for the great crusade that the pope had promised to the Byzantines, and some of the main political actors were not keen on a new war with the Ottomans.

This became evident during the peace offer made by the sultan in 1444.⁵⁵ Frightened by Hungarian military successes from the previous year and by the Christian coalition which gathered against him, the sultan appealed to the despot of Serbia, George Branković, to mediate peace with Hungary. Directly interested in the sultan's offer, Branković obtained John Hunyadi's support, offering in exchange his domains from Hungary.

The sultan's peace offer was very advantageous for the Hungarian kingdom,⁵⁶ but the papal legate Giulio Cesarini found a way to make the treaty impracticable. Before concluding the peace, he asked King Wladislas and Hunyadi to swear that the treaty they would sign with the Ottomans would be null from the very beginning, and that war with the infidels would take place in any

50 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages*, I, trans. Frederick Ignatius Antrobus, (London, 1891), 326.

51 Ulricus Hüntemann (ed.), *Bullarium franciscanum*, I, (nova serie), (Quaracchi, 1929), 899.

52 Stanko Andrić, *The Miracles of St. John Capistran*, (Budapest, 2000), 20–23.

53 Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*, 59–60.

54 Graff, *Episkopat monarchii jagiellońskiej*, 297.

55 Francisc Pall, "Autour de la croisade de Varna: la question de la paix de Szeged et de sa rupture (1444)", *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique*, XXII (1941), 2: 144–158; Oscar Halecki, *The Crusade of Varna. A Discussion of Controversial Problems*, (New York, 1943); Jan Dabrowski, *L'année 1444*, (Krakow, 1952); Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th Century)*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2000), 101–109.

56 John Jefferson, *The Holy ars of king Wladislas and sultan Murad. The Ottoman-Christian conflict from 1438–1444*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), p. 409.

situation.⁵⁷ The fact that a hero of Christendom was ready to give up the crusade for some landed property is an expression of the preeminence of political interest to the detriment of the general interest, represented by the crusade.⁵⁸

In turn, the Polish Estates called the diet of Piotrkow to discuss the matter of the war with the Ottomans. They wrote to King Wladislas, on 26 August 1444, urging him to keep the peace which was concluded with such advantageous conditions and to return to Poland to prepare the fight against the Tartars who were ravaging Russia and Podolia.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the Polish Diet also wrote to the voivode of Moldavia, informing him that he owed allegiance to King Wladislas only in his quality of king of Poland, but not of Hungary,⁶⁰ thereby giving the Moldavian prince a reason for boycotting the crusade. The Poles did not believe in the idea that the Ottomans could be chased out of Europe. The Polish nobility saw in the clauses of the peace treaty the maximum that could be obtained for Hungary and Poland; they were aware that political interests of the two realms diverged from those of the papacy, which is why they tried to convince the king to change his mind about the crusade.⁶¹

John Hunyadi, Kilia and the Fall of Constantinople

The disaster of Varna put an end to the dynastic union between Hungary and Poland and brought the rivalry between the two realms into focus again. In the years 1447 and 1448, John Hunyadi intervened in Wallachia and Moldavia, where he enthroned princes who were favourable to his politics, thus ensuring the presence of troops from Wallachia and Moldavia at the Battle of Kossovopolje.⁶² Following the intervention in Moldavia, King Casimir IV wrote to Hunyadi, inviting him to be more concerned with the fight against the Ottomans and to leave in the king of Poland's care the dispute between the candidates to the throne of Moldavia.⁶³ In his answer from 1 August 1448,

57 Pál Engel, "János Hunyadi and the Peace 'of Szeged' (1444)", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae*, XLVII (1994) 3: 241–257.

58 János M. Bak, "Hungary and Crusading in the Fifteenth Century", *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century. Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 122–123.

59 Sokolowski and Szujzki, *Codex epistolaris I*, 140–143.

60 A. Prochaska, "Uchwaly walnego zjazdu w Piotrkowie z 1444 roku", *Ateneum*, II (1887): 352.

61 Dabrowski, "La Pologne et l'expédition de Varna en 1444": 73–74.

62 Francisc Pall, "Intervenția lui Iancu de Hunedoara în Țara Românească și Moldova în anii 1447–1448", *Studii. Revista de Istorie*, XVI (1963), 5: 1049–1067.

63 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 33–34.

Hunyadi did not mention the rights of Hungary over Moldavia, pleading for his protégé's dynastic rights and on the common cause of Christendom instead. Hunyadi therefore asked the Polish king not to remove Prince Peter II, who was useful in the fight against the Ottomans, and praised the war in the name of the cross and in the memory of the late king Wladislas.⁶⁴

Related with Hunyadi through a matrimonial alliance, Prince Peter II of Moldavia was indeed very useful for Hunyadi's anti-Ottoman policy. In 1448, Peter II surrendered Kilia to Hungary, and, in return, Hunyadi pledged to defend him against the Ottomans.⁶⁵ Hungary thus obtained control over the mouth of the Danube and a strategic point in the confrontation with the Ottomans.⁶⁶ The reaction came promptly, and in June 1448 the sultan's fleet attacked Kilia, but was crushed by Hunyadi's troops.⁶⁷ Peter II sent an army to fight under Hunyadi's command at Kossovopolje, where the Christians were severely defeated. A letter of Pasquale of Sorgo mentions that prince of Moldavia sent three thousand horsemen and credits the papal legate Cristoforo Garatone with mobilising the troops from Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania for the battle.⁶⁸

64 "Promitto autem V. S. per praesentes, ut si eadem in hac parte votis meis deferendo, id pro iusto efficere curaverit et dictus Petrus Woywoda, quoad ipsam pacem conficiendam post reditum meum aequitati et iustitiae parere noluerit, quod eidem post S. V. praecise sicut ipsa S. V. pro mea possibilitate hostis ero, nec ab ea re affinitas aut fraterni amoris zelus me quomodolibet poterit revocare. Ceterum princeps excellentissime, promptus iam cum totali apparatu meo bellico his proximis diebus auctore domino contra Theucrorum dominum exercitualmente procedere institui, cum eodem pro fide, pro patria, pro viduis et orphanis, pro libertate, praeter in vindictam blasphemiae Crucifixi et casus domini naturalis excellentissimi scilicet principis dni Wladislai, Hungariae Poloniaeque regis, fratris uterini S. V. in virtute dextrae Dei mutuam proelium commissurus. Et quamvis Theucer ipse paratus me ferocque praestoleatur in campo gratia certandi, illo tamen non obstante procedam intrepidus, iustam enim causam habeo" (Sokolowski and Szujzki *Codex epistolaris I*, 41).

65 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 177.

66 Francisc Pall, "Stăpânirea lui Iancu de Hunedoara asupra Chilieii și problema ajutorării Bizanțului", *Studii. Revista de Istorie*, XVIII (1965), 3: 619–638.

67 Matei Cazacu and Pierre Ș. Năsturel, "Une démonstration navale des Turcs devant Constantinople et la bataille de Kilia (1448)", *Journal des savants*, (1978), 3: 197–210.

68 N. Iorga, "Du nouveau sur la campagne turque de Jean Hunyadi en 1448", *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, III (1926), 1–3: 15–16; Aurel Decei, "Oastea lui Iancu Huniade înainte de bătălia de la Kosovo. Scrisoarea lui Pasquale di Sorgo", *Revista Istorică Română*, 16 (1946), 1: 40–50.

It was also suggested that there might a direct link between Garatone's mission and Hunyadi's intervention in Wallachia and Moldavia,⁶⁹ but the support of the Holy See for the extension of Hungarian influence over Moldavia is evident. In July 1446, Fabian of Bachia, vicar of the observant province of Bosnia, was reconfirmed as inquisitor with increased duties. On this occasion, Moldavia was mentioned in the papal bull as a powerful base of the Hussite heresy, which threatened to poison the neighbouring kingdoms, especially the realm of Hungary; Fabian of Bachia was mandated to put an end to this situation.⁷⁰ In 1447, with the reorganization of the provinces, Fabian of Bachia became the first leader of the observant vicarage of Hungary, and through the agency of the observants, the Holy See included Moldavia into the jurisdictional area of the Hungarian primacy, to the detriment of the Polish one.⁷¹

The king of Poland accepted Hunyadi's request, but he conditioned Peter II's remaining on the throne of Moldavia on him paying the homage and reclaiming the alienated Moldavian territories.⁷² Of concern here was the control of Kilia by Hungary. Peter II's death in 1449 restarted fights for the throne of Moldavia. Hunyadi supported Bogdan II to the detriment of Alexander II, a candidate who was protected by the Poles. Although King Casimir was less preoccupied with the problems south of his realm, being engaged in the events in the Baltic, he could not ignore the calls for help of his aunt, Mary Holszanski, Alexander II's mother. A first Polish military expedition into Moldavia led to Bogdan II's temporary removal, but Alexander II did not last long on the throne.⁷³

Casimir continued to support his cousin,⁷⁴ who relied on the alliance of two powerful noble families from the palatinate of Russia and Podolia, Odrowaz and Buceacki.⁷⁵ Alexander II had thought of a solution to rid Moldavia of the Hungarian influence definitively. The plan was to incorporate Moldavia into the Polish realm, to install a Polish garrison at Akkerman, to banish Bogdan II,

69 Adrian Andrei Rusu, "Giovanni da Hunedoara e Cristoforo Garatone", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A.D. Xenopol"*, XXIV (1987), 2: 23.

70 Hüntemann, *Bullarium franciscanum*, I, 494–495.

71 Pilat, *Studii privind relațiile Moldovei cu Sfântul Scaun și Patriarhia Ecumenică*, 124–127.

72 Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești*, II, 733–740.

73 Vasile Pârvan, *Alexăndrel vodă și Bogdan vodă. Șapte ani din istoria Moldovei, 1449–1455*, (Bucharest, 1904), 34–42.

74 Henryk Lowmiański, *Polityka Jagiellonów*, (Poznań, 2006), 179.

75 Maciej Wilamowski, "Magnate Territories in Red Ruthenia in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries", *On the Frontier of Latin Europe. Integration and Segregation in Red Ruthenia, 1350–1600*, ed. Thomas Wünsch and Andrzej Janeczek, (Warsaw, 2004), 105–111.

and compensate Alexander II with possessions in Ruthenia.⁷⁶ In the summer of 1450, the Polish army commanded by Peter Odrowaz entered Moldavia to remove Bogdan II. His mission proved to be difficult as the prince refused to fight with the Polish armies. After a few months of pursuits and breached peace negotiations, the Battle of Crasna took place on 6 September 1450. The Polish army won but suffered severe losses, and had to retreat from Moldavia having attained none of its objectives.⁷⁷

The confrontation with Poland determined Bogdan II to be closer to Hungary; he declared his loyalty to Hunyadi and the Hungarian crown, and offered new assurances about Kilia.⁷⁸ Hunyadi was extremely interested to hold onto such a strategic point which held a crucial place in Hunyadi's plans for the crusade. Therefore, Kilia was included in the armistice with the sultan.⁷⁹ After expeditions from 1444 and 1448 ended in failure, Hunyadi intended to sail across the sea toward Adrianople and Constantinople, in an attempt to avoid the vicissitudes of dry land and to take the Ottomans by surprise. Early in 1453, Hunyadi negotiated and obtained from the Byzantine emperor the port of Mesembria, where he was to disembark his troops and come to the aid of Byzantium.⁸⁰ It was a new version of a similar plan proposed by Sigismund of Luxembourg to the Venetians in 1408, the major difference being that Hungary had the control over Kilia and the northern Black Sea region.

In January 1453, King Ladislas the Posthumous rewarded Hunyadi for his merits, including bringing Wallachia and Moldavia back under the authority of the Hungarian crown.⁸¹ This observation was true, despite the Polish king's

76 "Consultum autem fuit Casimiro Regi, ut tempus opportunum, sibi oblatum, non negligeret, sed terram paedictam Moldaviae, faecundam rebus omnibus, sed et portu suo Albo Castrensi, opulentam, personaliter cum exercitu aggrederetur. Et Bohdano expulso, vel capto, Ilichnone vero aliqua sorte in terris Russiae contentato, terram ipsam perpetuo Regno Poloniae uniret et incorporaret. Verum, quia res haec laboriosa videbatur, aliam deliberationem Casimirus Rex secutus est" (Joannes Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, Lipsiae, 1712, 59).

77 Pârvan, *Alexândrel vodă și Bogdan vodă*, 45–53.

78 Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești*, II, 751.

79 "... sic etiam Kilie et ad eam pertinentes, sibi obediens et alia quecumque ad sacram regni Ungarie coronam pertinentes, tenete a meo dominio et ab hominibus mei domini, per tres annos" (Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 24).

80 Francisc Pall, "Byzance a la veille de sa chute et Ianco de Hunedoara (Hunyadi)", *Byzantinoslavica*, xxx (1969), 1: 119–126. For the echo of the episode in some Burgundian chronicles see Ovidiu Cristea, "Căderea Constantinopolului (1453) și politica pontică a Ungariei: ecouri occidentale", *Revista istorică*, 7 (1996), 7–8: 599–603.

81 Iozsef Teleky (ed.), *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*, x (Budapest, 1854), 350.

claims to Moldavia. Installed on the throne after the assassination of Bogdan II, Prince Alexander II understood that he would not be able to last in his rule without Hunyadi's acceptance. For this reason, he too declared his allegiance to the Hungarian crown and intention to become related by marriage to the voievod of Transylvania.⁸²

The stronger Hungarian influence in Moldavia increased the measures aimed at controlling the Hussite heresy and the support for the Franciscan observants, who were now led by John of Capistrano. In 1452, the pope was informed about the presence of an impostor in Moldavia, so-called canonic of the church St. John of Lateran, who preached Hussite teachings and endangered the very existence of the Catholic diocese. Consequently, Nicolas V delegated the archbishop of Esztergom to resolve the situation.⁸³ We know that the papal curia was informed about the situation in Moldavia from a mid-fifteenth century manuscript from the Vatican Library, which describes the errors of the Hussite heretics in Moldavia.⁸⁴ In that year, Capistrano sent three Franciscan friars to Moldavia to preach against Hussite heresy.⁸⁵ Their mission was a failure so they went to Poland, where they complained that the secular power of Moldavia was favoring the heretics.⁸⁶

The actions of the observants took place while the Hussite leaders from Bohemia went to Constantinople to discuss the union with the Greek-Orthodox Church.⁸⁷ The progress of Hussitism in Moldavia was well-known in the Byzantine capital.⁸⁸ In March 1453, the king of Hungary asked Capistrano to send two brothers to establish a Franciscan monastery in Kilia, which was Hunyadi's wish.⁸⁹ At the same time, military preparations were being made in Kilia, and on 11 April 1453, the prince of Wallachia suggested his involvement

82 Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești*, II, 743–744.

83 Radu Rosetti, "Despre unguri și episcopiile catolice din Moldova", *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, XXVII, (Bucharest, 1905): 65–66.

84 Janusz Smolucha, *Politika Kurii Rzymskiej za pontyfikatu Piusa II (1458–1464) wobec Czech i krajów sąsiednich: z dziejów dyplomacji papieskiej w XV wieku*, (Krakow, 2008), 143.

85 Lucas Waddingus, *Annales minorum seu trium Ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, editio tertia, XII, (Quaracchi, 1932), 160.

86 Władisław Abraham, *Biskupstwa łacinskie w Moldawii w wieku XIV i XV*, (Lwów, 1902), 30.

87 I. Macurek, "Husitismul în România", *Revista Istorică*, XIV (1928), 1–3: 43.

88 Papacostea, *Evul Mediu românesc*, 283.

89 Pettkó Béla, "Kapisztrán János levelezése a Magyarokkal", *Történelmi Tár*, IV/2 (1901): 164–165: "Inter quos nostros fideles hunc nostrum bone voluntatis zelum fidelissimus noster Johannes de Hwnyad alias regni nostri Hungariae gubernator nunc comes pepetuus Bistriciensis et eiusdem regni nostri capitaneus generalis non mediocriter accendit, qui alias ut per suas, ita nunc per nostras litteras pro quodam loco tui ordinis fratribus in

in a transport of Hungarian weapons to Kilia. It was a delicate matter, argued the prince, and above all it was important not to awake the suspicions of the Turks.⁹⁰ The prince had a point, for at that very moment the siege of Constantinople was well underway. Hunyadi failed to save Byzantium because, on 29 May 1453, Constantinople was captured by the sultan, to the great shock of the entire Christian world.

The news spread quickly and, on 9 July 1453 the emissaries of the Moldavian prince informed the king of Poland about the fall of Constantinople.⁹¹ About the same time, the metropolitan of Moldavia was making a call for solidarity with the refugees of Constantinople.⁹² Joachim, the last Greek metropolitan of Moldavia to be appointed by a Byzantine emperor, had been bishop of Agathopolis before 1447.⁹³ Joachim's letter is similar to that of Cardinal Isidor⁹⁴ in describing the dramatic situation of the inhabitants and the churches of Constantinople. The description of Constantine's citadel tragic end does not include the siege, containing only scene meant to stir the indignation of all Christians, such the profanation of churches and of holy relics, and the massacre of the Christians from the city.⁹⁵

Kylja in finibus Moldavie ad honorem Sancti Bernardini edificando erga tuam religiosam paternitatem suppliciter per nos intercedi postulavit”.

90 “Ecce modo venit ad nos famulus Stoyke Gizdavich dicti et dicit nobis quomodo magnificus dominus Iohannes de Hunyad dominus et pater noster quasdam armas ad castrum Kilye transmittere vellet, que erga vos essent nunc. Ad que sic respondemus et dicimus vobis propter metum Turcorum, ne nobis impedimenta fierent ex parte ipsorum Turcorum et dicerent tandem et resciret, quod cum voluntate nostra forent talia; ideo petimus vos, quatenus easdem armas, in quacumque forma existant, caute et secreta nostro sub nomine adduci faciatis precise ad curiam et domum nostram in Tergovistia, abhinc tandem cum homine ipsius Stoyke et et nostro caute et occulte ad Braillam, abhinc vero usque castrum Kilye transmittemus; propter ipsum dominum et patrem nostrum Iohannem de Hunyad non tantum in hijs, et pluribus sibi fideliter servire et ejus voluntatemfacere volumus” (Bogdan, *Documente privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Brașovul*, I, 315).

91 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 116.

92 Petre Ș. Năsturel, “Urmările căderii Țarigradului pentru Biserica românească”, *Mitropolia Olteniei*, XI (1959): 51–54.

93 Michel Lascaris, “Joachim, métropolitte de Moldavie et les relations de l'Église moldave avec le Patriarchat de Peč”, *Académie Roumaine. Bulletin de la Section Historique*, XIII (1927): 129–130.

94 Agostino Pertusi (ed.), *La caduta di Constantinopoli*, I, (Florence 1976), 92–101.

95 Năsturel, “Urmările căderii Țarigradului”: 59.

The Eastern Border of Christendom, Mehmed II and the Byzantine Legacy

At the same time, Moldavia received more bad news: the sultan had sent a letter to all the realms of the Black Sea region asking for immediate submission. After the conquest of the Byzantine capital, Mehmed II had decided to restore the territorial inheritance of his predecessors, the Byzantine emperors, and to that end he sent ultimatums to all countries which had previously been part of the Byzantine Empire or under its authority. The young sultan requested all obedience to the new power in Constantinople. His demand was not inconclusive.⁹⁶ On 23 June 1453, Angelo Giovanni Lomellino from Pera wrote to his brother, telling him about the events in Constantinople. After describing the beheading of the Venetian bailo and of the Catalan consul, he wrote that the sultan sent emissaries to Kios, Caffa and all the places around the Black Sea to ask tribute and to announce that in less than two years he would arrive in Rome.⁹⁷

It is very likely that the prince of Moldavia received the news of the fall of Constantinople and the Ottoman ultimatum from the same emissaries of the sultan. He turned for help to his suzerain, the king of Poland. In a long letter from 10 September 1453, addressed to Aenea Silvio Piccolomini, the Cardinal Zbigniew Olesnicki ascribed the sultan's claims to Moldavia as a consequence of the fall of the Byzantine Empire, also noting that a firm opposition against the Ottomans lacked, at that moment, the necessary military means.⁹⁸ Hungarians too realised that the northwest Black Sea area was the next target for the Ottomans. At 30 April 1454, John Hunyadi asked to the officials of Braşov to send him the requested weapons he needed to defend Kilia. A month later, there was a widespread rumor that the sultan intended to conquer the aforementioned fortress.⁹⁹

96 Şerban Papacostea, "La Moldavie, état tributaire de l' Empire Ottoman au XV^e siècle: le cadre international des rapports établis en 1455-1456", *Revue Roumaine d' Histoire*, XIII (1974), 3: 445-461.

97 L. T. Belgrano, "Prima serie di documenti riguardante la colonia di Pera", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, XIII (1884): 231.

98 "Jam magnam partem Europae, iam Graeciae imperium Turcus occupavit, iam a vaivoda Moldaviae pheodali regni nostri Poloniae, caeterisque principibus gravia tributa requirit; nihil tamen defensae, nihil armorum, nihil gentium comparari videmus, quoniam talem casum, tale vulnus restauraret et rescindat, alius Ladislaus non extat" (Sokolowski and Szujski, *Codex epistolaris I*, 320).

99 Pall, "Stăpânirea lui Iancu de Hunedoara asupra Chiliei": 626 and 630.

The Ottoman threat is presented in even darker colors by Jan Lutek of Brzezia, the Polish emissary at the Diet of Regensburg. On 5 May 1454, he told of the Ottoman domination in the northwest area of the Black Sea as being a certainty. After the fall of Constantinople, he went on to give an account of how Moldavia came under the power of the Turks, which created a direct boundary between Poland and the Ottoman Empire. Jan Lutek asked for the help of the emperor and of the other princes who were present at the Diet, so that the realms of Poland and Hungary remain unconquered by barbarians.¹⁰⁰ Even if a future confrontation with the Turks and the Tartars was worrying for Poland, the realm was not as exposed as Hungary at that moment. Lutek obviously exaggerated in order to demonstrate the eagerness and fervor which King Casimir invested into the defense of faith and the reconquest of Constantinople.

The Diet of Regensburg, one of those “Turkish *Reichstage*” organised in 1454–1455,¹⁰¹ had been called in order to prepare the general crusade for expelling the Turks from Europe.¹⁰² It provided a good opportunity for the king of Poland to complain about the difficulties he was facing. Still, Poland’s real reason for attending was not to paint King Casimir as an eager crusader, but to advocate its cause in the disputes with the Teutonic Order. Present at the sessions of the Diet, Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini recorded the conflict between the Polish and the followers of the Teutonic Order and Jan Lutek’s famous line, which claimed that if the Order should want to start a new war, it

100 “Excidio Bizantina non Graecorum solum imperio attulit, quantum Ungariae ac Poloniae Regnis, n isī provideritis, maximam perniciem est alatura. Jam Valachiam Moldaviamque terras Regni Poloniae Turcus iuris sui fecit. Jam vectigal illi annum praestatur et capite census omnes illarum regionum accolae constituit. Nullum iam freto, ut ante, inter nos et illos est discrimen. Nullae gentes mediae. Olim Tartaris Regno nostro confrontatis supra vires nostra erat resistentia. Nunc minus virium, minus anime credite esse utrique nos populo et hosti duplicato resistere. Oratum itaque ad excellentissimam Maiestatem Tuam, Caesar inclite et ad hos clarissimos celeberrimosque princeps veni ex parte Illustrissimi d. Regis Poloniae, ut in hoc sacro vestro conventu, cura vobis praecipua sit tam de Ungariae quam Poloniae Regnis, ne in potestatem ditionemque Barbarorum deveniant providendi” (Sokolowski and Szujski, *Codex epistolaris I*, 151).

101 Johannes Helmraath, “The German *Reichstage* and the Crusade”, *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century. Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 57–62.

102 N. Iorga (ed.), *Notes et extraits pour servir a l’histoire de croisade au XV^e siècle*, IV, (Bucharest, 1915), 90–91; Smolucha, *Politika Kurii Rzymskiej*, 97–100.

would actually aid the Ottomans.¹⁰³ The Polish representatives proceeded in the same manner in their relations with the Holy See, and the message addressed to Pope Nicolas v includes also information about the installing of the Ottoman domination north of the Black Sea.¹⁰⁴ In the middle of year 1454, Jan Lutek was sent to Rome to present Poland's point of view about the situation in Prussia and to explain his country's important contribution at the fight against the enemies of Christendom. His mission was a success.¹⁰⁵

The events in Moldavia in the spring of 1454 did not represent an Ottoman attempt at conquest, but a fight for the throne between Alexander II and Peter Aaron. As Prince Alexander was sure of the Polish king and of Hunyadi's aid, his rival had no other option but to seek support from the Ottomans or the Tartars. There is no direct information regarding an Ottoman military intervention, but the Tartars who took part in the fights in Moldavia were playing on the Ottoman side. In March 1454, the Genoese envoys were sent to the sultan to negotiate an agreement, convinced that free navigation on the Black Sea was vital for them. The emissaries had to underline before the sultan that their domination at Caffa had never been a part of the Byzantine Empire, but fell under the authority of the Tartars khan, who had never claimed tribute from them.¹⁰⁶ In response, in April 1454, an Ottoman emissary was sent to Caffa. Although he did not receive the expected answer, he reached an agreement with the Tartar khan against Caffa.¹⁰⁷ As a result, in July 1454, an Ottoman fleet sailed to Akkerman¹⁰⁸ before launching an inconclusive attack against Caffa.

Poland reacted to the events in Moldavia by granting military aid to Alexander II. In October 1454, the Polish magnates Odrowaz and Buceacki organised an expedition in Moldavia, "contra Walachos et Tartaros."¹⁰⁹

103 Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen and Ernst Strehlke (eds.), *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, IV, (Leipzig, 1870), 227.

104 "Non contentus siquidem Thurcus Bizantina praeda in continentem mari Pontico superato transgressus, et Valachiam, Moldaviamque Regni Poloniae terras invadens, sui iuris effecit. Jam regiones illae vectigal Turco praestare coguntur. Jam universos regionum illarum mare set foeminas capite census sibi constituit" (Sokolowski and Szujski, *Codex epistolaris I*, 153).

105 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 103; Stachon, *Polityka Polski wobec Turcyi*, 117–122.

106 Belgrano, "Prima serie di documenti riguardante la colonia di Pera", 267–268.

107 Iorga, *Chilia și Cetatea Albă*, 113.

108 Amedeo Vigna, "Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la signoria dell' Ufficio di S. Giorgio", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VI (1868): 103.

109 *Akta grodzkie i ziemskie z czasów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z archiwum tak zwanego bernardyńskiego we Lwowie*, XIV, (Lwow, 1889), no. 3234.

Alexander II was reinstalled on the throne of Moldavia,¹¹⁰ but his assassination in the summer of 1455 at Akkerman left Poland with few options. King Casimir had to accept Peter Aaron, who made assurances of his loyalty to Andrew Odrowaz, the palatine of Russia, during the encounter of Hotin on 1 October 1455.¹¹¹ On 29 June 1456, Peter Aaron reiterated his promise to pay homage to the king of Poland.¹¹² In this written act, a special clause established that any present and future treaty which might be harmful to Poland was declared invalid: the homage paid to the sultan by the Moldavian prince also would become void should the Ottomans become enemies of the Polish king.

Chronicler Martin Kromer registered the payment of a tribute of 2,000 ducats, to appease the sultan's intentions toward Moldavia after the conquest of Constantinople. Because it was at war with the Teutonic Order, Poland could not help its friends and vassals.¹¹³ This motivation for the payment, used as a tool of Polish diplomacy in the late sixteenth century, led scholars to conclude that Moldavia accepted the condition of tributary state to the Ottoman Empire with Poland's agreement. The submission is seen as the expression of a Polish-Ottoman compromise, accomplished through the agency of Moldavia.¹¹⁴ The chronology of the events shows that the situation was created by circumstances and not by a Polish-Ottoman negotiation. In March 1455, the Genoese colonies of Crimea agreed to pay a yearly tribute of 3,000 ducats to the sultan, which allowed them to continue trading in the Black Sea.¹¹⁵ A letter of Sultan Mehmed II sent to Peter Aaron on 5 October 1455 shows that the Moldavian prince did negotiate with the sultan and that he agreed to pay an annual tribute of 2,000 ducats.¹¹⁶ We can conclude that the Moldavian-Ottoman agreement was reached at a time when the king of Poland had no obligations toward the new Moldavian prince. The Moldavian-Polish relations went back to normal

110 Iłona Czamanska, *Moldawia i Wołoszczyzna wobec Polski, Węgier i Turcji w XIV i XV wieku*, (Poznan, 1996), 117.

111 Costăchescu, *Documente moldovenești*, II, 775–776.

112 *Ibid.* 784.

113 “Indidem autem comperimus hoc anno, hunc ipsum palatinum una cum consiliariis suis misisse oratorem ad principem Turcarum Mahometem, ut pacem ad eo duum millium aureorum tributum redimeret. Nam ist post subactum Constantinopolitanum imperium vehementer vexabat Valachiam: et distinebantur tunc Poloni bello Prussico, ne socii set clientibus opem ferre possent” (Martin Kromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum*, (Basel, 1555), 519).

114 Papacostea, *Evul Mediu românesc*, 126.

115 Marian Malowist, *Kaffa-Kolonia genuenska na Krymie i problem wshodni w latach 1453–1475*, (Warsaw, 1947), 159–160.

116 Mustafa Mehmed (ed.), *Documente turcești privind istoria României*, I, (Bucharest, 1976), 1.

afterward. The existence of the sultan's letter in the royal archive of Krakow illustrates that King Casimir was informed about the Moldavian-Ottoman negotiations,¹¹⁷ but that he accepted the situation as it was, even though it was obscured by juridical formulas. The so-called "allegiance of Vaslui," which took place on 5 June 1456,¹¹⁸ was in fact a guarantee granted by the boyars to Moldavian chancellor Mihail who was in charge with carrying the tribute. The text specifies clearly that the pledge of the Moldavian prince would not lead to an integration of Moldavia into the Ottoman political system, but was only a manoeuvre to restore the peace. Submission to the Ottoman power is presented as a way of taming the "infidels," and the payment of the tribute as a temporary measure.¹¹⁹

Crusading versus Economic Interests

The excuses made in the act of allegiance, which refer to the lack of powerful allies and the temporary character of the submission, were actually obscuring a new orientation in Moldavia's foreign policy, begun by Peter Aaron and his followers.¹²⁰ In truth, a radical switch of Moldavian politics in the Black Sea region took place, a change prompted by the need to adapt to the new realities of the conquest of Constantinople and Ottoman expansion in the Black Sea basin. Peter Aaron's refusal to return to the Genoese the Castle of Illice, placed at the mouth of the Dnieper and conquered by Moldavians in May 1454, was an adaptation to the new context, where all relevant decisions were executed by the powers who controlled the Straits.¹²¹

117 "Imperator Turcarum regi Poloniae significant se pacem fecisse cum Petro palatino Valachiae, et mandasse suis subditis ut non impediunt negotiationem mari et terra. Anno 1455" (E. Rykaczewski (ed.), *Inventarium omnium et singulorum privilegiorum, litterarum, diplomatum, scripturarum et monumentorum quacunq[ue] in archivo regni in arce Cracoviensi continentur*, (Paris, 1862), 143).

118 Leon Şimanschi, "« Închinarea » de la Vaslui (5 <iunie> 1456)", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie A.D. Xenopol*, XVIII (1981): 613–637.

119 Leon Şimanschi, Georgeta Ignat, Nistor Ciocan, Dumitru Agache (eds.), *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, A, II, (Bucharest, 1976), 85.

120 [P. P. Panaitescu], "Pe marginea folosirii izvoarelor cu privire la supunerea Moldovei la tributul turcesc (1456)", *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, v (1952), 3: 191–192.

121 Ştefan Andreescu, *Din istoria Mării Negre (Genovezi, români și tătari în spațiul pontic în secolele XIV–XVII)*, (Bucharest, 2001), 125–126.

This reorientation was also motivated by an important economic interest.¹²² upon paying the tribute, the sultan granted the merchants from Akkerman the trading privilege to travel with their ships to Bursa, Adrianople and Istanbul.¹²³ Moldavia's largest port, Akkerman, competed with the Genoese commercial centres on the Black Sea shore. Within the new framework of Ottoman political and economic hegemony in the Black Sea,¹²⁴ the Muslim traders appeared in the markets of Lwow as a consequence of Sultan Mehmed II's privilege for Akkerman. Trade and commercial exchanges grew along the south-north routes in the Black Sea region.¹²⁵ The privileges granted by Peter Aaron in the summer of 1456 to the merchants of Braşov and Lwow are also part of these new developments in the region. The trade of Akkerman was the topic of a special discussion between Peter Aaron and King Casimir IV.¹²⁶

It should be emphasised that pathos-filled rhetorical formulae masked important political and economic interests, making the Moldavian "act of submission" a somewhat hypocritical document. The document does not specify the motivation of the commitment, but consists of excuses offered to fend off a possible internal and external opposition.¹²⁷ This rhetorical choice is understandable, if we consider the fact that the Ottoman threat and the concern for defending the Christian faith were the dominant themes of the political and religious discourse in Europe.¹²⁸ In 1455, Pope Callixtus III proclaimed the general crusade against the Turks which, for Eastern Europe, was to be preached and organised by the observant Franciscans from the vicarage of Bosnia, led by John of Capistrano.¹²⁹ In turn, Peter Aaron was in favor of this missionary offensive of the observants, demanding to all the Hussite refugees from

122 Ernst Oberlander-Târnoveanu, "Moldavian Merchants and Commerce in Constantinople in the 15th Century in the *Book of Accounts* of Giacomo Badoer", *Etudes byzantines et post-byzantines*, 11, (Bucharest, 1991), 166–172.

123 Mehmed, *Documente turceşti*, 1, 2.

124 Şerban Papacostea, *Studii de istorie românească. Economie şi societate (secolele XIII–XVIII)*, (Brăila, 2009), 71–102.

125 Halil Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, 1, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 278.

126 Costăchescu, *Documente moldoveneşti*, 11, 787.

127 [P. P. Panaitescu], "Pe marginea folosirii izvoarelor": 191.

128 Robert Schowobel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453–1517)*, (New York, 1967); James Hankins, "Renaissance Crusaders: Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 49 (1995): 111–207.

129 Norman Housley, "Giovanni da Capistrano and the Crusade of 1456", *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century. Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 94–115.

Moldavia to come under the authority of the Catholic Church.¹³⁰ The prince of Moldavia could not have departed from the anti-Ottoman rhetorical frame of mind: to discuss the advantages and disadvantages brought by the submission to the Ottoman Empire and to announce a radical change of the foreign politic. Theoretically, he joined the traditional policy of his predecessors, the only element of novelty being the payment of the two thousand ducats. The Ottomans, in turn, were considering the statute of *kharâj-güzârlar* as deriving from 'ahd, a temporary peace which depended only on the sultan's will; it had to be renewed periodically and could be broken anytime, according to the interests of Islam.¹³¹

The first tribute of Moldavia was paid at a moment when it was clear that the target of the Ottoman expedition was Hungary, but the prince could not anticipate the result of the confrontation. Caffa displayed a similar prudent attitude: in March 1456, the town refused Hunyadi's demand to send battleships, emphasizing the difficulty of crossing the Straits and the threat of Turkish pirates.¹³² In July 1456, in the Battle of Belgrade, John Hunyadi obtained "the greatest crusading victory over the Turks in the fifteenth century".¹³³ The triumph from Belgrade was celebrated with public processions and religious services at Rome. The pope invited all Christians to pray for John Hunyadi and his army, and had all the bells of the Catholic churches toll in the honor of victory. The moment of shock caused by the fall of Constantinople, which led to an overestimating of the Ottoman threat in Europe, was thus overcome.¹³⁴ Enthusiastic about the success, the pope wrote that the victory opened not only the path to recover Constantinople, but to free Europe, Asia and the Holy Land as well.¹³⁵

130 "Multas circa horum et Petri Voyvodae seu Praesidis Moldaviae conversionem iuvenio ad eum missos epistolas a religiosis et Catholicis presbyteris, quas infidae gentes conversioni per oppida et municipia disposuit" (Lucas Waddingus, *Annales minorum seu trium Ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, editio tertia, XII, (Quaracchi, 1932), 301).

131 Viorel Panaite, "The Status of *Kharâj-güzârlar*. A Case Study: Wallachians, Moldavians and Transylvanians in the 15th–17th Centuries", *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation. I. Politics and Institutions*, ed. Kemal Çicek, (Ankara, 2000), 227–238.

132 Vigna, "Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri": 535–536.

133 Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580. From Lyons to Alcazar*, (Oxford, 1992), 103.

134 Bonnie Millar-Heggie, "Sanctity, Savagery and Saracens in Capystranus: Fifteenth Century Christian-Ottoman Relations", *Al-Masâq*, 14 (2002), 2: 114; E. Kovács Péter, "A nándorfehérvári győzelem és Itália", *Történelmi Szemle*, XLIX (2007), 3: 319–325.

135 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, II, (London, 1891), 404–406.

Until the end of his pontificate, Callixtus III hoped to organise a general crusade and continued to put pressure on the Christian leaders. In May 1458, the pope wrote to the king of Poland, summoning him to join the emperor and the king of Hungary in the fight for the Christian cause and urging him not to conclude any kind of deals with the Turks, under the penalty of excommunication.¹³⁶ About the same time, Casimir IV was preoccupied by the war with the Teutonic Order and the situation in Moldavia where, in the previous year, Stephen, Bogdan II's son, had removed Peter Aaron. Still, the new prince maintained the political line of his predecessor in his relations with Poland and the Ottoman Empire, and he was even willing to reclaim the territory conceded by the previous princes, although that implied a conflict with Wallachia and Hungaria.

In the treaty signed by the prince of Wallachia with Braşov, on 1 October 1460, the possibility of an attack from the Ottomans or from the prince of Moldavia was mentioned, in which case the prince of Wallachia would receive a military aid of 4000 soldiers from Braşov, Sibiu and the Szeklers.¹³⁷ The stake of a Wallachian-Moldavian confrontation was the fortress of Kilia, now under Vlad the Impaler's control. The intention of the Moldavian prince to reclaim it was already known. Vlad the Impaler's involvement in the anti-Ottoman fight and the sultan's campaign in Wallachia in 1462 offered Stephen the Great the opportunity to act. In the act of homage of 2 March 1462, Stephen the Great pledged to maintain Moldavia's territorial integrity and to retrieve the lost territories,¹³⁸ which implied King Casimir's willingness to retake Kilia. This fact is confirmed by a letter sent by the consul of Caffa to King Casimir, on 2 April 1462, in which the king was asked to include the Genoese colonies in a peace treaty with the Ottomans or to use any other means to take the Genoese colonies under his high protection. The officials of Caffa were worried about Stephen the Great's intention to attack Vlad the Impaler and asked Casimir, in his capacity as suzerain of the prince of Moldavia, to intervene into the conflict between the two princes. The Genoese hoped that through the Polish mediation, the sultan would not take advantage of the Moldavian-Wallachian conflict

136 "Quod impresentiarum a tua Serenitate petendum esse existimamus, duo precipua sunt: unum, ut te omni benevolencia et caritate cum principibus christianis et finitimis, et presertim cum Imperatore et Rege Hungarie te iungas, eosque tibi concilies; secundum, ut pacis seu treugarum faciendarum cum perfido Turcho condiciones nullas acceptes, sed ne verbum quidem de eis faciendis patiaris fieri, idque sub anathematis et maledictiones perpetue pena tue Serenitati precipimus et mandamus" (Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, II, 114).

137 Gustav Gündisch, "Vlad Țepeş und die Sächsischen Selbstverwaltungsgebiete Siebenbürgen", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, VIII (1969), 6: 992.

138 I. Bogdan (ed.), *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, (Bucharest, 1913), 287.

and would not occupy new territories in that region, a fact which would have represented a danger for all the neighbouring states.¹³⁹ Moreover, they were afraid that the war would endanger their commercial interests in the region; as a matter of fact several Genoese caravans were intercepted by the Moldavian lord who confiscated the goods and threw the merchants in prison. One of the witnesses, Gregorio of Reza, a former consul of Caffa, gave a full account of the events in a report sent to the government of Genoa asking for retaliation. His plea remained without result as the relations between Moldavia and Genoese Caffa remained tense until the conquest of the city by Gedik Ahmed pasha in 1475.¹⁴⁰

About the same time, Pope Pius II sent the archbishop of Crete, Jeronimus Lando, to ask King Casimir to put an end to the war with the Teutonic Order and to fight against the Ottomans. The mission had no concrete result, partly because Jeronimus Lando was a lot more preoccupied with obtaining a cardinal's hat than to organise a crusade.¹⁴¹ The Genoese appeal had no effect and, in June 1462, the prince of Moldavia launched the attack on Kilia on land, while the Ottoman fleet attacked the fortress by sea. The siege failed. Stephen the Great suffered an injury that he carried for the rest of his life, and the Ottoman fleet was forced to abandon the siege.¹⁴² According to Laonic Chalcocondylas the initiative of a joint action against Kilia belonged to Stephen the Great and was not the fulfilment of any obligation of military aid owed to the sultan.¹⁴³ In the same year, Stephen the Great banished a mission of the observant Franciscans, led by the curator of Transylvania, declaring ironically that he can

139 Amedeo Vigna, "Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la signoria dell' Ufficio di S. Giorgio. Tomo II—parte 2", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VII/2 (1879): 468–470: "Preterea intelleximus dominum Stefanum vaiuodam, dominum Moldaue, Valachie Minoris, bellum facere cum domino Vlado vaiuoda, bellum Theucris feliciter infert, quorum discordia non solum fauorem Theucris ipsis affert, verum, quod magis pestiferum est. Ipsi Thurci per hanc discordiam alioquem aditum intrandi in ipsas Valachias habere possunt, quos esset maximum periculum, tam nostram, quam vicinarum aliarum regionum. Quare Serenitatem vestram oramus ut pacem inter illos fieri facile (?) posse dicitur per vestram Serenitatem, maxime quia ipse Stephanus vaiuoda in confinibus sedens vestre potenti majestati cui subditus est ... quoniam in his et in nostris requisitis (?) et misericordiam a Domino Deo nostro et ab hujus mundi principibus laudem et gloriam consequemini" (ibid. 470).

140 Ștefan Andreescu, *Izvoare noi cu privire la istoria Mării Negre*, (Bucharest, 2005), 87–92.

141 Smolucha, *Politika Kurii Rzymskiej*, 269–278.

142 Iorga, *Chilia și Cetatea Albă*, 124–127.

143 Ovidiu Cristea, "« Ami de l'ami et ennemi de l'ennemi »: la collaboration militaire moldo-ottomane pendant le règne d'Etienne le Grand", *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe*, III (2011): 93–96.

defend himself from the Turks without their help.¹⁴⁴ The decision of the prince was made in a context in which the Hungarian observants were praised for their missionary successes in Moldavia. In the previous year, the pope granted new privileges to the Observant friars from Hungary, who had lost twenty convents because of the Ottoman incursions, privileges which included Moldavia as well.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the episode occurred in a moment in which relations between Moldavia and the Hungarian realm were tense. In 1462, King Matthias Corvinus wrote to the prince of Transylvania, asking him to send to Buda Moldavia's former ruler, Peter Aaron,¹⁴⁶ thus putting pressure on Stephen the Great.¹⁴⁷ The former Moldavian prince accepted this role, hoping to reoccupy the throne with the king of Hungary's help. In October 1464, sources mention that the prince of Moldavia participated at the siege of the fortress Zvornik, this being the second anti-Ottoman expedition organised by King Matthias in Bosnia in that year,¹⁴⁸ after the pope had proclaimed the crusade the previous year.¹⁴⁹ In this case, the prince of Moldavia must be identified with Peter Aaron,¹⁵⁰ because his rival, Stephen the Great, was promoting an anti-Hungarian policy, very similar to the one proposed led by Peter Aaron before losing his throne.

In January 1465, Stephen the Great initiated a new attack against Kilia, this time a successful one. After a one-day siege, on 24 January the fortresses surrendered, and Stephen the Great appointed two Castellans who were entrusted to defend the citadel from the "pagan nations."¹⁵¹ This expression is used in documents to mean the Turks and the Tartars, and in this case it had to do with the political context, which differed from 1462. Kilia was under the control of the prince of Wallachia, Radu the Handsome (1462–1474), who had good relations with Hungary, but was also loyal to Sultan Mehmed II. Another chronicle mentions a fight on 28 January 1465, with Radu's army, who received important Ottoman military aid. The prince of Moldavia won and ordered the

144 I. Macurek, "O știre inedită despre Ștefan cel Mare", *Revista Istorică*, x (1924), 7–9: 183–184.

145 Joseph M. Pou Y Marti, *Bullarium franciscanum (nova serie)*, II, (Quaracchi, 1939), 498.

146 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/2, 4.

147 Șerban Papacostea, "Une épisode de la rivalité polono-hongroise au XV^e siècle: la campagne de Mathias Corvin en Moldavie (1467) à la lumière d' une source inédite", *Revue Roumaine d' Histoire*, VIII (1969), 6: 968–969.

148 *Monumenta Spectantia Historiam Slavorum Meridionalium*, xxv, (Zagreb, 1893), 371.

149 Housley, *The Later Crusades*, 107–109.

150 Victor Eskenasy, "O precizare asupra politicii externe a Țării Românești în vremea lui Radu cel Frumos", *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, xxx (1977), 9: 1666–1667.

151 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 16.

prisoners, who were more than 200, to be impaled.¹⁵² Dlugosz confirms that the fortress of Kilia had been controlled by the prince of Wallachia and that its conquest by Stephen displeased the sultan. Dlugosz also mentions King Casimir's diplomatic help. According to the chronicler, Casimir addressed a letter to the inhabitants of Kilia which influenced their decision to surrender the fortress to the Moldavian prince. Although the sultan was ready for an expedition of revenge, the payment of the tribute and the gifts offered by the Moldavian emissary made him accept the control of Moldavia and Poland over Kilia.¹⁵³ The king of Hungary reacted differently to the events. In 1465, an emissary of the sultan was sent to Buda to conclude a peace treaty. Although officially the Ottoman offer was rejected and King Matthias continued to pose as a devoted crusader and to receive stipends from the pope, it is most likely that a secret agreement was concluded between the parties, extended later on until 1473.¹⁵⁴ Ensured on the Ottoman side, King Matthias initiated an expedition in Moldavia with the purpose of reinstalling Peter Aaron and to bring Moldavia under Hungarian suzerainty. The Battle of Baia, from December 1467, ended inconclusively and both sides claimed victory. Wounded, King Matthias was forced to retreat from Moldavia and the campaign's indirect result was a strengthening of the Moldavian-Polish relations.

On 1 January 1468, Stephen the Great asked for military aid from King Casimir, highlighting the atrocities inflicted by the Hungarians and foreseeing a Hungarian-Ottoman attack against Moldavia.¹⁵⁵ King Casimir and the Polish Estates reacted with letters of protest to the king of Hungary, to whom they reminded that the two realms were a shield of Christendom against the barbarians and that Moldavia was vassal to Poland.¹⁵⁶ In his reply, King Matthias reasserted Hungary's rights over Moldavia and declared that he had the right to punish Prince Stephen who, like the Turks, was plundering his realm.¹⁵⁷ The diplomatic actions unfolded while King Matthias was preparing for a new expedition in Moldavia and, in 1468, an emissary of the sultan went to Buda for

152 Ibid. 31.

153 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 344–345.

154 Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 307.

155 P. P. Panaitescu, "Contribuții la istoria lui Ștefan cel Mare", *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, xv, (Bucharest, 1934), 63–64; N. Iorga, "Le lettre d'Étienne-le-Grand, prince de Moldavie, sur la bataille de Baia (1467)", *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, xi (1934), 7–9: 251–252.

156 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/2, 188.

157 Stephano Katona, *Historia critica regum Hungariae*, xv, (Colotzæ, 1792), 294.

new peace negotiations.¹⁵⁸ A report presented to King Casimir in the spring of 1468, referring to king of Hungary's campaign in Moldavia, was showing that the voivode was no longer controlling the south area of his country. Rumor was that Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were to conclude a perpetual peace, sealed by a matrimonial alliance between King Matthias and Mehmed II's daughter with the consequence that Hungary was to receive the territories occupied by the Turks in recent years and the tribute which Moldavia was paying to the sultan.¹⁵⁹ Given the fact that both realms suspected one other of secret agreements with the Ottomans, the likelihood of a Hungarian-Polish conflict was higher than a common action against the Ottomans. For this reason, the Hungarian-Polish harmony became an important objective of the papal policy: good relations between these two Eastern polities were absolutely necessary for accomplishing the general crusade against the Ottomans.

158 Vilmos Fráknoi, "La politique extérieure du roi Mathias de Hongrie, 1464–1470", *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*, IV (1891): 394–395.

159 Papacostea, "Une épisode de la rivalité polono-hongroise": 978–979; "Qui quidem nuncius, fama vulgante, primus post imperatorem, offert regi Hungariae filiam sui imperatoris in uxorem. Cui pro dote omnium terrarum ab annis superioribus per ipsos Thurcos occupatarum et possessarum, que ad regnum Hungarie antiquitus pertinebant totalem restitutionem perpetuo duraturam repromittit, et insuper terram Bulgarie perpetua donacione regno Hungarie adiicens, eciam terras Moldauię superioris in favorem regis Hungarie a tributo spondet absolvi, de quo alias imperatori Thurcorum respondebant, et prout quisque apprehendere potest iudicio rationis, consilii regni Hungarie premisam oblacionem facillime amplectentur, paci perpetue et sue commoditati rationabile consulendo".

Crusade and Political Propaganda in the Last Years of Mehmed II

The military successes of Mehmed II against Venice during the war of 1463–1479 significantly increased the sultan's fame in Western Europe. After the conquest of Negroponte (1470), the terror provoked by the sultan's military might after the fall of Constantinople was doubled by the fear inspired by the sultan's naval power. More than ever, a joint Christian action to stop Ottoman expansion was required, but such an ideal political and military alliance was difficult to put into practice. Just as before, there was a significant gap between the ever-flourishing rhetoric of the crusade, developed by some important humanists of the era,¹ and action. Neither the Pope nor any of the Christian princes were able to gather enough forces to launch a large offensive against the Ottoman Empire; the so-called crusades of the period were more or less regional wars which involved only some of the Christian powers.

The Crusade of Pope Sixtus IV

Nonetheless, the papacy never gave up the attempts to organise a crusade aimed at putting an end to the Ottoman threat. This task was assumed from 1471 onward by Francesco della Rovere, who chose the name of Sixtus IV after his election as pope.² The new pope considered the fight against the infidels as a priority of his pontificate, and the first step to achieve his goal was to secure a general peace among Christendom, a preliminary condition for any attempt to organise a crusade. At the end of 1471, in an encyclical letter, the pope urged the

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- 1 James Hankins, "Humanist Crusade Literature in the Age of Mehmed II", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 49 (1995): 111–207; Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought*, (Harvard University Press, 2008); for the activity of Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini see the recent work of Andreea Mârza, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini și Cruciada târzie*, (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2009) with all the bibliography.
 - 2 Lorenzo Di Fonzo, *Sisto IV. Carriera scolastica e integrazioni biografiche (1414–1484)*, (Rome, 1987).

Christian kings to stop fighting one another and to take arms against the infidels whose intention was to wipe the Christian faith off the face of the earth.³

In December 1471, in order to put the Pope's plan for the crusade into action, the secret Consistory designated five cardinals who were to call upon all of Christendom to defend the Catholic faith.⁴ Cardinal Bessarion was sent to France, Burgundy and England, Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia to Spain, while Italy was entrusted to Angelo Capranica, and Germany, Hungary and Poland to Marco Barbo. The fifth cardinal, Oliviero Carafa, was appointed leader of the pontifical fleet, which was to be gathered with the support of the king of Naples. The Pope's project was designed to unleash a general crusade against the Turks, which was to unfold on three directions with the final aim of surrounding Mehmed II. The Occidental princes were to strike the Turks in the Balkans, the fleet of the Italian states was supposed to attack the infidels on the sea while an Oriental ally, the lord of *Ak Koyunlu* confederation, Uzun Hasan, was supposed to launch a strong offensive against the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. These expectations were justified by the diplomatic contacts established in August 1471, when Uzun Hasan's emissaries visited Rome.⁵

The presence of the *Ak Koyunlu* (White Sheep) lord in this coalition was a success of Venice's efforts to unite all the forces which were threatened by the rise of the Ottoman power. Such diplomatic endeavors were intensified after the fall of Negroponte, when in a desperate search for allies, Venice established diplomatic contacts with powers from north and east of the Black Sea area. In October 1471, with the Pope's benediction and support, the Venetian ambassadors established contacts with Uzun Hasan and King Alexander of Georgia.⁶ Venice was eager to offer its naval support and firearms to the Oriental enemies of the Ottomans in order to encourage them to launch an attack against the Anatolian provinces of the sultan. With Uzun Hasan's military help, Venice was hoping to contain Ottoman expansion in the Aegean Sea and Albania and,

3 Odorico Raynaldo, *Annales ecclesiastici*, x, (Lucae, 1753), 520; Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, (Philadelphia, 1978), 315.

4 For legates as an instrument of Papal diplomacy see Birgit Studt, "Legatio als Instrumente päpstlicher Reform- und Kreuzzugspropaganda im 15. Jahrhundert", *Formen und funktionen öffentlicher kommunikation in Mittelalter*, ed. Gerd Althoff (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2001), 421–453.

5 Pastor, *The History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Age*, IV, trad. Frederick Ignatius Antrobus, (London, 1900), 219; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 272. For the first contacts between Western powers and Uzun Hasan see John E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu. Clan, confederation, Empire*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 114; Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, 224–225.

6 Enrico Cornet, *Le guerre dei veneti nell' Asia, 1470–1474*, (Vienna, 1856), 30.

eventually, to obtain a favourable peace. The Republic's main goals were the preservation of its possessions in Albania and Morea and free access to the Black Sea for Venetian ships.⁷

After the fall of Negroponte, Venice renewed its diplomatic offensive. This time they tried not only to strengthen the previous contact established with Uzun Hasan but also to convince other Christian and Muslim powers to join the anti-Ottoman coalition. In 1471, the so-called "Scythian project" was born aimed at convincing the Golden Horde to join the anti-Ottoman coalition. Such an idea was the result of the diplomatic contacts established between the grand prince of Muscovy and Rome, focused on negotiations to conclude a marriage between Ivan III and Zoe Palaiologus, daughter of the despot Toma Palaiologus. One of the members of the embassy, an Italian, informed the Venetian Senate that the khan of the Golden Horde was willing to join the fight against the Ottomans, hiring an extraordinary army of 200,000 men.⁸ Venice reacted by sending the secretary Gian-Battista Trevisano to discuss the possibility of an alliance and to bring detailed information regarding the countries which the emissary was about to cross. Meanwhile, the negotiations on the marriage continued, promising to bring a new ally to the Christian camp. There were rumors that the grand prince of Muscovy will accept, through the agency of his wife, a union with Rome. The Byzantine princess received her dowry from the money intended for the crusade, which denotes a strong connection between the matrimonial alliance and the Pope's plans for a crusade.⁹

At that moment, no one suspected the important role that Moldavia was to play in the years to come in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. A document from 1471, which describes in detail the military and financial contributions of the participants, mentions also the Wallachians, considering that they would voluntarily raise arms against the Turks when the king of Hungary would proceed with his army.¹⁰ The main focus on the document was on the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland which, beginning with 1471, disputed the crown of Bohemia. The crown was claimed by Matthias Corvinus with the pope's aid, but was obtained, after the death of George Podiebrad, by

7 Halil Inalcik, "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades, 1451–1522", *A History of the Crusades*, VI, ed. Kenneth M. Setton, (Wisconsin, 1989), 328.

8 For the Venetian attempts to establish a collaboration with the Tatars see Nagy Pienaru, "Proiectul scitic. Relațiile lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Hoarda Mare", *Revista Istorică*, 14, (2003), 5–6:121–135.

9 P. Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint Siège. Etudes diplomatiques*, I, (Paris, 1906), 160–161.

10 Nagy Iván, B. Nyáry Albert (eds.) *Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Acta externa*, IV, (Budapest, 1877), 233.

Wladislas Jagiello, King Casimir's elder son, with his election by the Bohemian states.¹¹ The Polish-Hungarian rivalry deepened after a plot designed to overthrow Matthias, led by archbishop John Vitéz,¹² offered the throne of Poland to Casimir the Young, King Casimir IV's son. As a result, the Jagiellonian prince entered Hungary with his army to take over his throne. King Casimir also appealed to the prince of Moldavia, demanding military support.¹³

Moreover, the Polish king tried to gain for his cause the Szeklers from South-Eastern Transylvania which were Matthias Corvinus' subjects. As King Casimir's proclamation states, the oath of allegiance of the Szeklers should have been paid to Stephen the Great of Moldavia, a vassal of the Polish crown, until Casimir the Young was able to secure the Hungarian throne.¹⁴

However, the Moldavian reaction was quite different from the expectations of the Polish king. In his reply, the prince of Moldavia refused to send the requested support invoking the fact that his realm was threatened by Turks, Tartars, and Hungarians. More serious than these potential threats was the argument concerning the open and violent conflict with the neighbouring prince of Wallachia, Radu the Handsome, which—according to Stephen—compelled Moldavia to use all his military forces in the war. However, Stephen added, he was eager to support the Polish claims to the Hungarian throne if King Casimir agreed to mediate the Moldavian-Wallachian conflict. According to the chronicler Jan Dlugosz, Casimir sent an emissary to conclude the peace between the two princes, fearing for the possibility that, otherwise, the lord of Wallachia might invade Moldavia with Turkish help.¹⁵ In turn, voievode Radu identified himself as a faithful liege of the Hungarians' king, and his diplomatic correspondence underlined that Wallachia and the Hungarian crown had a common enemy—Stephen of Moldavia.¹⁶

Given the fact that the conflict involved the vassals of the two kings, the mission of the pontifical legate Marco Barbo was extremely difficult. Shortly after his appointment as legate, he was entrusted with an important mission which included the preaching of the crusade against the Turks, the granting of

11 Krzysztof Baczkowski, *Walka Jagiellonów z Maciem Korwinem o koronę czeska w latach 1471–1479*, (Kraków, 1980); Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen. A History of Hungary, 895–1526*, trans. Tamas Pálosfalvi, (London-New York: Tauris, 2001), 304.

12 Vilmos Fraknói, *Hunyadi Mátyás Király 1440–1490*, (Budapest, 1890), 211–226; Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 304–305. In December 1471 prince Casimir was already forced to withdraw from Hungary.

13 I. Bogdan (ed.), *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, (Bucharest, 1903), 311–313.

14 Aleksander Jablonowski, *Sprawy włoskie na Jagiellonow: akta i listy*, (Warsaw, 1878), 31.

15 Joannes Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, (Lipsiae, 1711–1712), 458.

16 Gustav Gündisch (ed.), *Urkundenbuch zur geschichte der deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, VI, (Bucharest, 1981), 525.

spiritual privileges and the nomination of one or more crusade captains in the name of the Pope and of the Roman Church.¹⁷ Previously, the Holy See manifested its support for the kingdom of Hungary, considering Matthias a worthy successor of John Hunyadi in the fight against the Ottomans.¹⁸

Indeed, King Matthias proclaimed himself a fervent supporter of the crusade, but continuously postponed his military actions invoking various reasons.¹⁹ Towards the end of 1471, a copy of King Casimir's letter addressed to Matthias arrived in Venice, where Casimir accused the Hungarian king's false-heartedness. Matthias was accused of secretly reaching an agreement with the Ottomans at the expense of the Christian cause and of the crusade,²⁰ reasons which justified all attempts to remove him from the throne of Hungary.

To some degree, the accusations of the Polish king were well-founded. The Hungarian-Ottoman border went through a peaceful period, especially because the Ottoman raids aimed at the territories of the Habsburgs, Matthias's rivals, left no damages in the Hungarian territories they were crossing.²¹ Despite all these accusations, Sixtus IV continued to give his support to the king of Hungary. Consequently, on 1 March 1472, the pope authorised Marco Barbo to excommunicate the king of Poland and his elder son.²² On the same day, other documents were also issued, with the purpose of compelling Casimir to change

17 “[...] insuper cruciatam contra eosdem Turchos predicandi et ab aliis predicari faciendi, et cruce signatis contra eosdem Turchos pugnatibus, vel ad id contribuentibus, non solum semel ni vita, sed etiam in mortis articulo iuxta ordinationem tue circumspectionis, ut indulgentiam plenariam consequantur, concedendi” (E. Hurmuzaki (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, 11/2, (Bucharest, 1891), 205).

18 Péter E. Kovács, “Hungary, the Ottomans and the Holy See (1437–1490)”, *A Thousand Years of Christianity in Hungary. Hungariae Christianae Millennium*, ed. István Zombori, Pál Cséfalvay, Maria Antoaneta de Angelis, (Budapest, 2001), 73.

19 Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 306–307.

20 V. Makuscev (ed.), *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium Vicinorumque Populorum*, 11, (Belgrad, 1882), 125–126: “... et quod penis est hac strage illius inhumanissime teneri homines ex Hungaria expeliasti et abduxisti, et animas Christi fidelium abducere permisisti insuper christicolos, qui cum crutiata contra perfidos Teucros venerant graviter onerasti sed veraciter te minima vel parum in illa strage lexionem sensisse nam nulla te ad hoc urgebat necessitas, ut cum illo inhumanissimo Teucro te concordares, per quod tam magnum et maximum damnum provinciis et hominibus evenit, que nos pre pueritia et annorum carentia passi sumus: sed ex quo crevimus et ad annos discretionis pervenimus similem iniuriam et violentiam pati nolumus, ac expoliationem et exportationem gentium, per te et per Teucrum illum inhumanissimum geruntur”.

21 Inalcik, “The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades”, 329.

22 “Sixtus IV papa Marco legato suo regis Poloniae eiusque filii primogeniti excommunicandorum concedit potestatem” (A. Lewicki (ed.), *Index actorum saeculi XV*, (Krakow, 1888), no. 4125).

his attitude towards Hungary. Along with the verdict for the excommunication of Casimir and Wladislas,²³ the pope also disposed the release of the Polish vassals from their allegiance oath. Such was the case of the Teutonic Order²⁴ or of the nobles from Bohemia who had sworn an allegiance to Wladislas, the son of the Polish king.²⁵

Such a harsh decision was motivated by the fact that, theoretically, King Matthias was the champion of the Church against the common threat. Any act of hostility against him was considered an attack against Christendom and the only way to cancel the excommunication and to regain the favor of the Holy See was to throw down their weapons and to refrain from any further attacks against Hungary.²⁶ The measures taken by the Pope against King Casimir and his son produced quick results. Towards the end of March 1472, both camps ceased hostilities.²⁷ After the truce, on 1 May, the Pope instructed Marco Barbo to restore peace between Hungary, Poland and the Teutonic Order *ut omnibus modis*,²⁸ and in September he granted the legate full powers to guarantee the peace in the name of the Holy See.²⁹

The year 1472 brought the first results of the projects of crusade. *Ak Koyunlu* khan, Uzun Hasan, invaded the Ottoman territories, and his victories were recounted down to the last detail throughout Europe.³⁰ His emissaries went to Christian princes to convince them to start the fight against the Ottomans as soon as possible. As a symbolic gesture of good faith, his emissary sent to Rome received baptism from the Pope's own hands, along with the name of Sixtus.³¹

Uzun Hasan's diplomatic initiatives were not always successful. In July, the alliance suggested to the king of Poland was politely but firmly rejected.³² More successful was the mission in Hungary. An agreement between Uzun Hasan, Venice and Hungary was concluded eventually, which outlined the joint efforts

23 Sixtus IV papa regem Poloniae et filium eius Wladislaum sententias excommunicationis incurrisse declarat (Lewicki, *Index actorum*, no. 4126).

24 *Ibid.*, no. 4127.

25 *Ibid.*, no. 4129.

26 "... ut arma deponas et ulterius ipsum regem Hungariae non opugnes" (Stephano Katona, *Historia critica regum Hungariae*, xv, (Colotzae, 1792), 570–573).

27 Ignaz Aurelius Fessler, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, III, (Leipzig, 1874), 98.

28 Lewicki, *Index actorum*, no. 4140.

29 *Ibid.*, no. 4160.

30 Cornet, *Le guerre dei veneti*, 33–34.

31 Domenico Malipiero, *Annali veneti dall' anno 1457 al 1500*, (Archivio Storico Italiano, VII/1, Firenze, 1843), 79.

32 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 481.

of the three powers to destroy the sultan.³³ Good news arrived also from the crusader fleet. Despite a flawed collaboration between the Venetian ships and those of the king of Naples, in 1472, the fleet led by Pietro Mocenigo attacked and conquered Candeloro and Sattalia. Consequently, on January 1473, Cardinal Carafa entered Rome triumphantly, with a cortege of Turk prisoners on camels and trophies which were deposed in the Church of St. Peter.³⁴ Although the collaboration with Uzun Hasan's land forces could not be achieved, the Venetian fleet continued the campaign successfully and in the following year it had a crucial role in repelling the Ottoman forces which attempted to conquer Shkodër castle, in Albania.³⁵

Despite these small successes other actions aimed to widen the anti-Ottoman coalitions, initiated in 1472, failed. After her arrival to Muscovy, Zoe Palaiologus adopted Greek-Orthodoxy, a gesture which signified the vanishing of any chance that the Russians would accept the Church Union. The Venetian envoy, Gian-Battista Trevisano was arrested,³⁶ together with the initiator of the project of alliance with the Tartars, Gian-Battista del Volpe, under the accusation of negotiating in the great prince's name, without his consent.³⁷ Following the failure of the mission, the Pope's emissary retreated to Lithuania, where he gave indulgences by his authority as legate *a latere* for the Russian lands.³⁸

Bad news continued to arrive during 1473. In May, the rumor arrived to Rome that Hungary would make peace with the Turks and intended to fight against Venice in Dalmatia.³⁹ Eventually, the news proved to be false, but the pope wrote Matthias, showing his irritation at such an intention.⁴⁰ The conclusion

33 Iván and Albert, *Acta extera*, IV, 242.

34 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, IV, 228.

35 Bernard Doumerc, "De Scodrensi obsidione et expugnatione: la fin de l'Albanie vénitienne (1463–1479)", *Byzance et ses périphéries, hommage au professeur Alain Ducellier*, eds. B. Doumerc and C. Picard, (Toulouse, 2004), 135–159; Oliver Jens Schmitt, "La Chiave per l'Adriatico: Albania e Venezia nella percezione reciproca alla fine del medioevo", *Venezia, l'altro e l'altrove: aspetti della percezione reciproca*, ed. Susanne Winter, (Rome, 2006), 23–55.

36 Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint Siège*, 178–179.

37 K. V. Bazilevici, *Politica externă a statului rus centralizat în a doua jumătate a secolului al XV-lea*, (Bucharest, 1955), 72–73.

38 Oscar Halecki, "Sixte IV et la Chrétienté orientale", *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, II, (Rome, 1964), 252.

39 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, IV, 249.

40 Vilmos Fraknói (ed.), *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis Epistolae ad Romanos Pontifices*, (Monumenta Vaticana Historiam Regnum Hungariae Illustrantiam, VI, Budapest, 1891), 89–93.

of a peace between Hungary and Poland became a stringent issue for the Holy See's project of crusade. In January 1473, the Pope once again addressed Marco Barbo, appointing him legate during the diet from Niš.⁴¹ Marco Barbo's role as *angelus pacis*⁴² is also mentioned by Dlugosz, who speaks about the general diet, where Cardinal Marco instituted peace between the kingdoms of Hungary, Bohemia, and Poland.⁴³ One of the participants, Jacob, bishop of Wladislawia, communicated to the citizens of Gdansk, on 25 April 1473, that at the diet which lasted several days, and where various peace treaties with the king of Hungary were discussed, it was decided to conclude an eternal peace.⁴⁴ Ten days later, the same bishop addressed once again to the citizens of Gdansk with a more ample description of the proceedings. The peace had been concluded only between Hungary and Poland, but nevertheless the dispute continued to persist between Hungary and Bohemia. The bishop mentioned the pope and the Roman Curia's involvement in smoothing the disputation.⁴⁵ At Niš, the creation of a common Polish-Hungarian diet was decided, aimed at finding a solution to the dispute. The diet was scheduled to include eight delegates from Hungary, eight from Poland; for the question of Bohemia six delegates from Matthias and six from Wladislas were planned.⁴⁶

The negotiations continued throughout the year, because the sides had divergent approaches to the peace conditions. Matthias Corvinus proposed to put an end to the conflict by a dynastic alliance. He was asking the hand of Jadwiga, King Casimir's eldest daughter and a dowry including the lands of *Moravia, Slesia, Lusatia, Scepusiensis et Moldavia*. Confronted with such demands, the Polish king took into consideration a new outbreak of the conflict. In 1473, Casimir send an emissary to Frederick III, suggesting to the emperor a common campaign against Matthias, who was to be attacked by three armies, from different directions, one of them belonging to Stephen, the prince of Moldavia. For the Polish perspective, Matthias's demands were unacceptable, a clear sign that he had no will to sign a peace.⁴⁷

41 Lewicki, *Index actorum*, no. 4175.

42 For legation of Cardinal Marco Barbo and his report on the negotiations between Hungary and Poland see Antonin Kalous, *Plenitudo potestatis in partibus? Papežští légati a nunciové ve střední Evropě na konci středověku (1450–1526)*, (Brno, 2010), 245–284.

43 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 485.

44 *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti III*, ed. A. Lewicki, (Krakow, 1894), 175.

45 *Ibid.*, 176.

46 Ignaz Aurelius Fessler, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, III, (Leipzig, 1874), 104; Krzysztof Baczkowski, *Dzieje Polski późnośredniowiecznej (1370–1506)*, (Krakow, 1999), 236.

47 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 492 and 496–497.

A Schismatic Crusader

However, the involvement of the prince of Moldavia in the war against Hungary was, at that moment, highly improbable. More than ever the conflict with Wallachia compelled Stephen to take several military actions and diplomatic initiatives which distanced him from Polish interests. Thus, in 1473, the Moldavian lord seemed eager to put an end to a long conflict with the Genoese from Caffa.⁴⁸ In the same year, taking advantage of the Ottoman expedition against Uzun Hasan and of the fact that a large part of the army of Wallachia's prince joined the sultan's forces,⁴⁹ Stephen the Great decided that it was the moment for a radical solution, namely the dethroning of Radu the Handsome. On 8 November 1473, on the Feast of the Holy Archangels, the prince of Moldavia invaded Wallachia and struck a decisive blow against his rival in the battle of Potok. This initial success was followed by the surrounding of the Wallachian capital, on 23 November. During the night, the prince of Wallachia fled from the fortress, abandoning his family and his treasure, which fell into the hands of the Moldavian prince on the following day. After appointing Laiotă Basarab as prince of Wallachia Stephen the Great returned to Moldavia, where he had a triumphant entry.⁵⁰

From the Ottoman point of view, the Moldavian intervention in Wallachia was a *casus belli*, and Stephen the Great was well aware of it. Apart from the political reasons for the attack, the outbreak of war against the Ottoman Empire could be related with the eschatological expectations and political Messianic gestures in the Greek-Orthodox world,⁵¹ prompted by the end of the seventh millennium (according to the Greek-Orthodox calendar). Such eschatological fears increased in the Slavic-Byzantine world after the fall of Constantinople: the end of the world was expected in the year 7000, which corresponded to 1492 in the Julian calendar. An important role was played by the prophecy of Pseudo-Methodius from Pathara about "the last emperor,"⁵² which aroused a

48 Șerban Papacostea, "Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare și genevezii din Marea Neagră", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A.D. Xenopol"*, XXI (1992): 72.

49 *De i commentarii del viaggio in Persia di M. Caterino Zeno*, (Venezia, 1558), 16.

50 P. P. Panaitescu (ed.), *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV–XVI*, (Bucharest, 1959), 17.

51 Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, (Berkeley, 1985); ed. B. Lellouch, St. Yerasimos (eds.), *Les traditions apocalyptiques au tournant de la chute de Constantinople*, (Paris-Montreal, 1999); Donald M. Nicol, *The Immortal Emperor. The Life and the Legend of Constantine Palaiologos, Last Emperor of Romans*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 95–108.

52 Franz Kampers, *Kaiserprophetien und Kaisersagen im Mittelalter*, (München, 1895); E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Forschungen*, (Halle, 1898); Paul J. Alexander, "Byzantium

strong interest after 1453.⁵³ The work was not considered apocryphal in the Greek-Orthodox world, but accurate and holy.⁵⁴ According to this prophecy, at the end of the seventh millennium the last Greek-Orthodox emperor would defeat “the sons of Ismael” and he would rule in Jerusalem until the arrival of the Antichrist, who would climb Golgotha and place his crown on the Holy Cross, thus conceding the Christian kingdom to God. Interestingly enough, the oldest known text of this prophecy in Moldavia is found in a manuscript which also includes the vision of Pseudo-Daniel and a short chronicle of the emperors of Jerusalem, followed by the chronicle of Stephen the Great. It is a succession which is, by no means, a coincidence.

The period was favourable for interpretations of eschatological nature. The apparition of a comet, in January 1472, is registered with many details in Dlugosz’s chronicle, including the prediction of the disasters which were to befall in the following three years upon humanity.⁵⁵ The year 1473 is considered decisive for drawing the anti-Ottoman sword⁵⁶ and in this year Stephen the Great was called for the first time, in the inscription of a Gospel Book, “the faithful and of Christ loving emperor.”⁵⁷ The use of this title, which does not replace any of his previous titles,⁵⁸ underlined symbolically the Christian mission destined for the Greek-Orthodox emperor as a protector of the Church.⁵⁹ The Byzantine emperor’s disappearance and the conquest of almost all Greek-Orthodox states by the Ottomans, gave the Greek-Orthodox clergy from

and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last Roman Emperor”, *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*, 2 (1971): 47–82.

- 53 J. Darrouzes, “Lettres de 1453”, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines*, xxii (1964): 99–117; Vassilka Tapkova-Zaimova and Anissava Miltenova, *Historical and apocalyptic literature in Byzantium and medieval Bulgaria*, (Sofia, 2011), 218–256.
- 54 Ivan Dujcev, *Medioevo bizantino-slavo*, II, (Rome, 1968), 442.
- 55 “Sub tribus annis immediate se sequentibus, effectus suos producturus. Prodigium malum Regibus, Principibus et aliis illustribus et magnificis personis, cateris vero mortalibus inferioris conditionis, anxietates, metus, commotiones, turbationes, fraudes, deceptiones, combustiones, populationes et devastationes, tempestates, grandines, tonitrua, fulgura et terrae motum, in aliquibus partibus; aegritudines longas, cronicas, fittas et acutas, vomitus fortes, frenesim, epidimiae pestem, dolores, et tremores febrium, aborsum mulierum praegnantium significans” (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 480).
- 56 Ștefan S. Gorovei, “1473 - Un an cheie al domniei lui Ștefan cel Mare”, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Iași*, xvi (1979): 148.
- 57 Emil Turdeanu, *Manuscrisele slave din timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare*, (Bucharest, 1943), 121.
- 58 Ștefan S. Gorovei, “Titlurile lui Ștefan cel Mare. Tradiție diplomatică și vocabular politic”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, xxiii (2005): 78.
- 59 Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în Țările Române în secolele XVI–XVIII*, second edition, (Bucharest, 2001), 56.

Moldavia the possibility to think of their prince as a possible “last emperor,” given that there were only two decades left until the year 7000. The year 1473 had been prophesied as the starting moment of the fight against the “sons of Ismael” and a comparative analysis between the texts of the prophecies and the Moldavian chronicles revealed remarkable similitudes which suggest their use as political programme.⁶⁰ It is most unlikely that Moldavia’s prince would have allowed a mixture between the apocalyptic rhetoric and his political aims. It is rather a symbolical association crafted by the chronicler who used a wide known eschatological topic. Nevertheless, it is probable that at least a part of Moldavian society, especially the clergymen, have seen the contemporary events according to such a perspective. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to assume that from its early phase, the war of the Moldavian lord against the Ottoman Empire has the characteristics of a “holy war,” even if it cannot be considered a formal crusade.

The Ottoman reaction to the Stephen’s invasion in Wallachia came swiftly. On 23 December 1473, Radu the Handsome, supported by a large Ottoman army, regained his throne, forcing Laiotă Basarab to flee to Moldavia after a rule of only four weeks. Furthermore, toward the end of the year, an Ottoman force plundered southern Moldavia.⁶¹

Further, the sultan Mehmed II, threatening with an imminent invasion of Moldavia, asked Stephen the Great to resume the payment of the annual tribute and to deliver the fortresses of Kilia and Akkerman as a gesture of good will.⁶² Information about the sultan’s forthcoming expedition against Moldavia had already been circulating toward the end of the year. On 31 January 1474, some merchants from Ragusa informed the king of Hungary that the sultan was going to send Suleyman Pasha to Albania and Moldavia. The latter target was a result of Stephen’s aggressive policy against his neighbour.⁶³

Given these circumstances, the war against the Porte remained the only solution for the Moldavian prince. At the end of 1473, in the wake of the victory against Uzun Hasan, the sultan refused to renew the truce with Hungary. This decision was followed by an unexpected Ottoman attack on Oradea

60 Virgil Pâslariuc, “Enigma anului 1473”, *Retrospecții medievale. In honorem Professoris emeriti Ioan Caproșu*, ed. Victori Spinei, Laurențiu Rădvan, Arcadie M. Bodale, (Iași, 2014), 483–484.

61 Eugen Denize, “Ștefan cel Mare și luptele cu turcii. O nouă abordare”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, XIX (2001): 122.

62 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 516.

63 N. Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chiliei și Cetății Albe*, (Bucharest, 1899), 138.

in February of 1474.⁶⁴ At the same time, the peace between Hungary and Poland created the premises for the involvement of the two main powers in Central Europe in a war against the Ottoman Empire. On 21 February 1474, the Hungarian and Polish representatives signed two treaties at Stara Wiess, which put an end to the conflict and opened the path for participation to the crusade. Concluded in the presence of the Cardinal Marco Barbo, the Hungarian-Polish treaty stipulated the liberation of the prisoners taken during the war, the status of the Zmigrod and Muszyna fortresses, as well as the status of Moldavia. Considering the fact that both the Polish and the Hungarian kings had claims over the latter, the negotiators agreed to a two-year truce. They also stipulated that a final verdict be pronounced by a common Diet called to examine the rights of both kingdoms over Moldavia. During the armistice, both kingdoms promised to protect Moldavia against any invasion.⁶⁵

The truce between the two neighbouring kingdoms created a favourable context for the war against the infidels as it opened the way for a wide regional military cooperation. As a result, Stephen the Great reopened the conflict and attacked once again Wallachia, in March 1474. 700 prisoners were brought back to the capital at Suceava and hung in front of the fortress. Radu the Handsome retaliated with Ottoman support, and a large Moldavian expedition in Wallachia followed in autumn 1474. The Moldavian troops conquered the Teleajen fortress; the victory led to such a gruesome massacre during which, according to the chronicle, “blood poured out of the castle.”⁶⁶

Despite the failure, Radu the Handsome was determined to continue the war hoping that, eventually, Ottoman intervention would turn the tide of the war in his favor. Aiming to counter such a scenario, Stephen the Great asked King Casimir for support. The king sent the army of Podolia to aid Stephen, under the command of Michael Buczacki, and two Polish emissaries who had to mediate the peace between the two princes. The diplomatic initiative proved to be useless because, as the prince of Moldavia appreciated that Radu was not able to conclude an agreement on his own, being completely dependent on the Turks' will. The Polish emissaries found the prince at Vaslui, where “he kept watch and ward over so that the Turks and Radu would not invade his country.”⁶⁷

64 Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 307–308.

65 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 185.

66 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 32.

67 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 508.

Diplomatic Actions of Venice

Meanwhile, an intense diplomatic activity was led in favor of the crusade. The Pope welcomed the conclusion of the Hungarian-Polish treaty, urging Matthias Corvinus to observe the peace and to start the fight against the infidels as soon as possible. Sixtus IV showed his satisfaction with Matthias' determination to pursue the war against the enemies of the Cross, adding once again the regret that the holy expedition had been postponed by the dissensions between Hungary and Poland.⁶⁸

At the same time, Venice, who had carried the burden of the war against the Ottomans so far, renewed once again the efforts to find new allies against the sultan. On 26 September 1474, the Doge of Venice tried to persuade Matthias that it was a good occasion to initiate an action against the Turks, because the sultan was on his way to the Orient.⁶⁹ Uzun Hasan also asked for a joint action of the Christian princes against the Turks. After the defeat in the Battle of Bashkent (11 August 1473), the *Ak Koyunlu* lord was looking for revenge.⁷⁰ In order to determine the Christian princes to start the fight against the sultan, the khan made more than just a call for solidarity, putting forward many other tempting offers as well.

Consequently, one of the Uzun Hasan's emissaries arrived in Krakow along with Venice's ambassador, Caterino Zeno and presented to King Casimir a matrimonial offer which was meant to ensure the throne of Byzantium to the king's son. The khan offered the hand of one of his daughters, born from the marriage with Catherine Comnenus, the daughter of the emperor of Trebizond, and as dowry he offered the entire Greek realm and Constantinople, once these territories were freed from under the sultan's rule. Moreover, Uzun Hasan promised to support Casimir's claims to Hungary and Bohemia, kingdoms which Matthias had "unjustly" occupied.⁷¹

The Byzantine succession was also used in the negotiations with the grand prince of Muscovy by the Venetian emissary who came to ask the release of ambassador Trevisano. He underlined that Trevisano's mission was not directed against the grand prince of Muscovy, as its only purpose was to cast off the Tartars from the Muscovy's borders, directing them towards the Black Sea against the Ottomans. If such a goal would be achieved, the grand prince of Muscovy could inherit all the former Byzantine Empire owing to his marriage

68 Fraknói, *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis Epistolae*, 95–96.

69 Iván and Albert, *Acta extera*, IV, 263.

70 Inalcik, "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades", 329.

71 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 509.

to Zoe Palaiologus. The mission was a success and, in July 1474, Trevisano, once released, left for the Saray to negotiate the anti-Ottoman alliance with the khan of the Golden Horde.⁷²

The intensification of Venice's diplomatic activities was closely connected to the military developments. In 1474, the Ottomans began the siege of the Shkodër fortress, in Albania. As the stronghold was considered of high strategic value, the Venetians deployed all their diplomatic and military means to preserve it. Pietro Mocenigo's fleet was recalled from Cyprus in support of the besieged, while in June 1474, Sebastiano Badoer was sent to Buda to urge King Matthias to attack the Ottoman territories.⁷³

Unexpectedly, the relief came from a surprising direction. In August 1474, Suleyman pasha raised the siege and directed the army of Rumelia towards Moldavia.⁷⁴ Until that moment, Stephen the Great had not been a target for any Venetian diplomatic actions, but soon enough things were about to change. In November 1474, Paolo Ognibene, on his way back to Venice from Uzun Hasan's court, was received by the prince of Moldavia. Given the fact that the Ottoman invasion was imminent, Stephen the Great asked Ognibene to act as a Moldavian ambassador to the Venetian Senate and the Holy See. In a letter from 29 November 1474, the prince of Moldavia appointed Ognibene as his representative and swore an oath for the crusade. Stephen acknowledged the Pope's authority as spiritual leader of the holy expedition and expressed his readiness to fight for Christendom with all his forces. He also urged the pope to deploy all efforts so that "Christendom would not be overpowered by the maleficent unfaithful."⁷⁵

Given the fact that plenary indulgences, closely connected to the concept of Purgatory, were useless for a Greek-Orthodox prince, one should ask whether Stephen the Great was aware of the crusade's legal norms? Further, what did he expect from the pope? In addition, the role played by Paolo Ognibene, a Venetian subject, as a Moldavian envoy deserves particular attention. Such an unusual decision for the Moldavian prince (i.e. the use of a foreigner as a

72 Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint Siège*, I, 180–181.

73 N. Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră. III*, (Bucharest, 1914), 32: "Tentande sunt omnes vie ut civitate nostre Scutari succurri possit, et per diversionem, et per missionem presidiorum. Via autem diversionis est unica impresentiarum: per invasionem Serenissimi domini regis Hungarie, ad quem pro hac causa designatus est orator noster, vir nobilis Sebastianus Baduario, cuius accessus prodesse potest, ut tarditas vanam reddere potest missionem illius".

74 Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*, trans. Ralph Manheim, (Princeton University Press, 1978), 339.

75 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 5.

diplomatic representative) underlines that the adhesion of a Greek-Orthodox prince to the cause of the crusade represents the success of Venetian diplomacy that did not hesitate to negotiate with Orthodox princes, nor with Muslim ones, in order to drive them against the Ottoman Empire. There were probably mutual interests on both sides: Stephen the Great -who was in a difficult position- desperately needed financial and military support, while Venice tried to mobilise any potential enemy of the sultan in order to put an end to the war and to obtain an acceptable peace. Regardless of whether Stephen took advantage of the Venetian emissary's presence to establish a connection with the Holy See, or -on the contrary- his involvement in the war against the Porte was a success of the Venetian diplomacy, the original plans changed with the events: Paolo Ognibene could not deliver the message to its destination because, whilst in Buda, he received the news of the victory won by Stephen the Great at Vaslui (10 January 1475), which placed the prince of Moldavia in an entirely new position.

A Great Christian Victory

At the beginning of January 1475, the Ottoman army entered Moldavia, in search of a decisive clash with Stephen's army. The battle took place near the city of Vaslui.⁷⁶ The thick fog that day played an important role, making the orientation of the Ottoman army difficult. The first Ottoman attack caused a certain amount of panic in the Moldavian camp, even Stephen the Great being, for a moment, terrified. The bursts of the Moldavian artillery, alight on the flanks, restored the balance on the battlefield, and a flank counterstrike of the Moldavian army inflicted a decisive blow. Believing themselves surrounded, the Ottomans began to retreat in disorder. The consequence was a bloodbath which lasted, according to some chronicles, no less than three days, the casualties of the Ottoman army being estimated at approximately 40,000 dead and 4,000 prisoners. The high number of the dead was also due to the ice breaking when crossing the river Siret and to the flawed manner in which Suleyman pasha ensured his retreat. The prince of Wallachia, Laiotă Basarab, faithful to the prince of Moldavia, was besieged by the Turks in a fortress but, seeing the

76 Andrei Rădulescu, *Luptele lui Ștefan cel Mare cu turcii în anii 1475-1476*, (Bucharest, 1906); R. Rosetti, *Încercări critice asupra războaielor din 1475 și 1476 dintre Ștefan cel Mare și turci*, (Bucharest, 1914); Ion Cușsa, *Bătălia de la Vaslui (10 ianuarie 1475)*, (Bucharest, 1975).

Ottoman army's retreat, he broke out from the castle and inflicted great damages on the fleeing Turks.⁷⁷

After the battle ended, the prince of Moldavia made several symbolic gestures which were meant to highlight his victory. First, he executed the Ottoman prisoners, refusing any negotiations for their ransom.⁷⁸ Then he ordered, contrary to practice, that the victory be celebrated with a four days fasting with bread and water, as a token of gratitude to God, the one to whom the triumph was owed.⁷⁹ The victory achieved thus a divine character, and at first news presented it as a miracle accomplished by God through the hands of men for the destruction of the enemies of the Christian faith.⁸⁰ After the period of penance, Stephen the Great entered triumphantly in the capital of the country, Suceava. A cortege of priests, led by the metropolitan and the bishops, greeted the prince in a religious procession, hailing "Long live the emperor."⁸¹ The description of the event is quite similar with Constantine the Great's entrance in Rome after the victory from Pont Milvius, depicted in the *Panegyric of the Holy Emperors*, composed by the patriarch Euthymius of Tarnovo.⁸² The association with the first Christian emperor is not mere coincidence as Emperor Constantine was a favorite model for Greek-Orthodox rulers, especially after the fall of Constantinople. Such was the case with Boris Alexandrovich of Tver,⁸³ as well as the grand princes of Muscovy Basil II⁸⁴ and Ivan III.⁸⁵ However, for

77 Andrei Veress (ed.), *Acta et epistolae relationum Transylvaniae Hungariaeque cum Moldavia et Valachia*, I, (Budapest, 1914), 8.

78 N. Iorga (ed.), *Acte și fragmente privitoare la istoria românilor*, III, (Bucharest 1897), 94.

79 "Nec in superbiam aliquam ex hac victoria elatus, diebus quator continis ieiunium in pane et aqua egit. Per universam quoque terram suam bannum edixit, ne quis auderet sibi, sed soli Deo, illam victoriam appropriare: cum iudicio omnium die illius victoria ex uno eo stetit, ipsesque triumphi eius laudem fere solus et unus tulit (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 526).

80 "Ista Deus misericors nunc operatus est per humiles manus hominum in destructione inimicorum christianorum" (Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 8).

81 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 18.

82 Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină*, 103; Liviu Pilat, "Modelul constantinian și imagină-rul epocii lui Ștefan cel Mare", *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Atlet al credinței creștine*, (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2004), 436–437.

83 И. П. Лихачев, *Инока Фомы слово похвальное о благовърномъ великомъ князь Борисъ Александровичъ*, (St. Petersburg, 1901), LVIII–LX.

84 Michael Cherniavsky, "The Reception of the Council of Florence in Moscow", *Church History*, 24 (1955), 4: 352.

85 *Русская историческая библиотека*, VI, (St. Petersburg, 1880), 798–799.

the princes of Muscovy the figure of Constantine was associated with the idea of the Third Rome and their claims to the Byzantine legacy.⁸⁶

It was considered that Byzantine legacy was assumed also by Stephen the Great. The marriage of the prince with Maria Assanina Paleologhina as well as certain forms of artistic manifestations⁸⁷ were recently interpreted from the perspective of a *translatio imperii*.⁸⁸ Research in the last few decades has shown that in Muscovy's case there can be no discussion about the theory of a Third Rome before the late sixteenth century,⁸⁹ which implies a critical reevaluation of the transfer of the Byzantine imperial inheritance and of the expressions which led to this interpretation. The epithet of "New Constantine" and the associations with the first Christian emperor usually come from churchmen and do not reflect the princes' ambitions of becoming successors of the emperors, but rather expresses the availability of the clergy to recognise and legitimate the involvement of the local prince in ecclesiastical affairs, despite the interdictions imposed by canon law. This point of view also granted Emperor Constantine a sacerdotal dimension,⁹⁰ who, from a hagiographic perspective, always enjoyed the status of a quasi-bishop recognised by the clergymen. Given the disappearance of Byzantium, there can be no discussion about usurpation; more readily there was a search for an answer to the dilemma of a Church without empire.

Not just the Moldavian Church considered that Stephen the Great deserved a more important place among the Christian rulers. The enthusiasm stirred by the victory of Vaslui determined the Polish chronicler Jan Dlugosz to consider that to the prince of Moldavia should be awarded the honor to lead all of the army of Christendom against the Ottomans,⁹¹ in other words to be the captain general of the crusade, who would have been the ideal incarnation of Christian wrath. However, such acceptance by other Christian rulers was

86 Dimitri Strémoukhoff, "Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine", *Speculum*, 28 (1953), 1: 90–92.

87 André Grabar, *L'art de la fin de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age*, 1, (Paris, 1968), 171.

88 Dumitru Nastase, "Ștefan cel Mare împărat", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, xvi (1998): 65–102.

89 Daniel B. Rowland, "The Third Rome or the New Israel?", *Russian Review*, 56 (1996), 4: 591–614; Donald Ostrowski, "« Moscow the Third Rome » as Historical Ghost", *Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557). Perspectives on late Byzantine art and culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks, (New York, 2006), 170–179.

90 Liviu Pilat, "The "New Constantine" and Eastern European Political Thought after the Fall of Byzantium", *Classica et Christiana*, 10 (2015): 303–314.

91 "... cui totius principatus et imperium et praecipue munus imperatoris et ducis contra Turcorum, communi Christianorum consilio, consensu et decreto" (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 528).

more than problematic. Even Stephen, in his circular letter to the leaders of Christendom, adopted a cautious and humble attitude.

The documents of the Moldavian chancellery from this period show that the prince of Moldavia did not take any new titles, but that he was aware of the significant increase of his prestige and worried about an inevitable retaliation of the sultan. On 25 January 1475, in a letter addressed to all princes of Christendom, Stephen the Great wrote that “the unfaithful emperor of the Turks, who is the sworn enemy of the whole Christendom” sent an army of 120,000 men and “we [...] went against the enemies of the faith, we defeated them and crushed them under our feet, and put them all to the edge of the sword.” Warning about the imminence of a new Ottoman attack, the prince appealed for Christian solidarity, considering that the loss of Moldavia will be a huge blow for all of Christendom: “the unfaithful emperor of the Turks wants to take revenge [...] and to subdue our country, which is the gate of Christendom and which God has protected until now. But if this gate which is our country will be lost—God forbid! – then the entire Christendom will be in great danger.”⁹²

Matthias Corvinus Propaganda

Matthias Corvinus embodied the ideals of the Renaissance ruler. As an able politician, he used Machiavellian cunning and propaganda to achieve his objectives and he did not shy away from any method for strengthening his power.⁹³ He referred to himself as the only defender of Christendom, but it was simply a matter of political propaganda, intended to obtain a financial support of Venice and the Holy See.⁹⁴ For that reason, the Jubilee of 1475 had a particular importance for the king of Hungary. In January 1475 a Hungarian embassy

92 “L’infidèle imperatore turco a molti tempi e stato et de destrugitore della Christianita, et ogni di pensa, per qual forma el possa subjuarla. [...] Et noi audendo se armamo tucti et andamo contra di loro, con l’ ajuto de Dio omnipotente, noi verso delli inimici della Christianita. Vencemo loro, et sotto li nostri piedi li mettemo, et tucti li mettemo a taglio della spada. Et della qual cosa Dio ne sia laudato. Dopo questo lo infedele Turco, questa cosa audendo, ci vole reparare con la sua testa et con lo suo pensiero del mese din Maggio supra di noi, volendo havere questo porta della Christianita, la quale a nel nostro regno, dela qual cosa idio la guarda. Et se questa porta se fosse perduta fino a me, havria conturbata tutta Christianita” (Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 323).

93 Lonnie Johnson, *Central Europe. Enemies, Neighbors, Friends*, (Oxford University Press, 1996), 56.

94 Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 303.

leded by the bishop of Vezprem arrived in Rome.⁹⁵ On 2 February 1475, the envoys were received by Sixtus IV and Ladislas Vetesi offered a long discourse, very appreciated in Rome and printed immediately, even that the nature of the content required by the political situation is much stronger than rhetoric quality.⁹⁶ The defence of Shkodër is considered vital for Christianity and for the future of Roman church. If Shkodër fell, Rome would be the next target of the Ottomans.⁹⁷ At that moment, the army of Rumelia, who sieged Shkodër, suffered a critical defeat in Moldavia. It was a good occasion for Matthias Corvinus to take the victory of Moldavian prince in his advantage.

As a token of his military exploits, Stephen the Great sent Turkish prisoners and flags to the pope and the kings of Poland and Hungary, on whose help he counted the most. According to the chronicle of Jan Dlugosz, the prince sent along with the gift for the Pope a plea for help as the war against the infidels was not over yet. In the next paragraph, Dlugosz blamed the king of Hungary for claiming that the victory against the Ottomans could be attributed to one of his armies led by a Hungarian general.⁹⁸ Such statement has to be read with caution as the text is generally biased toward Matthias. Although no official letter of the Hungarian king claimed such thing, a careful analysis of the four copies of Stephen's circular letter preserved until today confirmed at least partially Dlugosz's assertion. In late February–early March 1475, on its way to the Western royal courts, Stephen's letter was translated and interpolated. One of these interpolations describes Stephen *capitaneo generale del re d'Ungheria*,⁹⁹

95 Vilmos Fraknoi, "Mátyás kiraly magyar diplomatai", *Századok*, xxxii (1898): 385–404.

96 Farkas Gábor Kiss, "Political Rhetorics in the Anti-Ottoman Literature. Martinus Thymavinus: *To the Dignitaries of the Hungarian Kingdom*", *Ein Raum im Wandel. Die osmanisch-habsburgische Grenzregion vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, eds. Norbert Spannenberger and Szabolcs Varga, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 146.

97 Ferenc Toldy (ed.) *Analecta monumentorum Hungariae historicorum literariorum maximum inedita*, (Budapest, 1886), 160: "Quid sibi voluisse credendum est, Beatissime Pater, in oppugnatione eius Epiri oppidi, cui vulgo Scutor nomen italo idiomate -ab illustribus verum scriptoribus Scodra nuncupatur- vocem illam sacrilegam: alala Machmet, Machmet! Roma, Roma! Non aliud profecto, quam expugnato eo oppido universa belli Italiam petere, latinamque ecclesiam et apostolicum principatum, omni extincto clero, machumeteae lege subiicere. O bone Deus! quantus erat per Italiam metus, cum Scodra obsidebatur; qui rumores circumferebantur, quid trepidationis omne hominum genus invaserat".

98 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 527.

99 Ștefan S. Gorovei, "Informație, propagandă, mistificare: scrisoarea din 25 ianuarie 1475", *Analele Putnei*, III (2007), 2: 21–26.

an unexisting title but which arguably expressed the status of Stephen as vassal of the king of Hungary.

Sure enough, this textual intervention was enabled by the humble manner in which Stephen the Great himself exploited his victory against the Ottomans. Moreover, despite the determination to pursue the war against the infidels, the wording of the letter was in striking contrast with Stephen's diplomatic initiatives toward the Western powers. In 1475, no Moldavian emissary was sent to the pope, thus the news about defeating the Ottomans reached the papal curia through the agency of Hungarian emissaries, who also carried to Rome the flags captured from the Ottoman army by the Moldavians.¹⁰⁰

It is very probable that the news of the Moldavian prince's victory arrived in Rome before 31 March 1475, and it was most likely delivered by Nicolas of Ujlak (Ilok), who went to Rome on pilgrimage during the occasion of the Jubilee Year. His arrival in Ferrara was mentioned on 21 February 1475; Ujlaki was accompanied by a large entourage, with no less than 110 horses.¹⁰¹ An interesting comment about his visit is found in one of the annotations from *L'Ospedale di Santo Spirito* in Rome, in which he is mentioned as "king of Bosnia and Wallachia."¹⁰² William Miller noticed this strange title, the conjunction between the crowns of Bosnia and Wallachia seeming highly unusual.¹⁰³ Collaborator of John Hunyadi and an acquaintance of John of Capistrano, Nicolas Ujlaki continued to hold important dignities during the reign of Matthias Corvinus who, as a sign of appreciation, granted him the title of "king of Bosnia" in 1471. This was rather honorary, because the Hungarian dominion over Bosnia was restricted after 1471 only to the fortress of Jaice and its hinterland.¹⁰⁴ A possible explanation for this strange association between Bosnia and Wallachia could be found in a paper published in the second half of the seventeenth century. Working on the history of the Augustinian order, Luigi Torrelli drew upon a variety of sources concerning the events of his time. Therefore, in the lines dedicated to the Jubilee from 1475, he also mentioned the king of Bosnia, who was con-

100 Fraknói, *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis Epistolae*, 100.

101 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, IV, 281–282.

102 "Bossinae quoque Rex atque Valachiae, licet gravis annis et senio esset confectus, ad visenda Apostolorum limina veniens, Sixtum Pontificem Maximum exosculatis ejus pedibus supplex adorat" (Lorenzo di Fonzo, *Sisto IV*, 23; Florio Banfi, "Romei Ungheresi del Jubileo del 1475. Niccolo Ujlaki re di Bosnia in un affresco nell' Ospedale di Santo Spirito dell' urbe", *Archivio di scienze, lettere ed arti della società italo-ungherese Mattia Corvino*, 111 (1941), 2: 503–510; Eunice D. Howe, *Art and Culture at the Sistine Court: Platina's "Life of Sixtus IV" and the Frescoes of the Hospital of Santo Spirito*, (Rome, 2005), 88).

103 William Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient*, (Cambridge, 1921), 511.

104 John van Antwerp Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, (Michigan, 1994), 588–589.

gratulated by the pope on the great victory against the infidels, obtained by Stephen the Great.¹⁰⁵ This context would identify him as Stephen the Great's messenger.

In a letter from 31 March 1475, the pope congratulated the prince of Moldavia on his victory, encouraging him to continue the fight against the Turks, but also warning him that he would not be able to send subsidies too soon, because they had already been directed toward the knights Hospitallers in Rhodes and the kingdom of Hungary.¹⁰⁶ In the following day, the pope composed a letter to the king of Poland, in which Sixtus IV pressed him to leave aside any differences with the king of Hungary and to start the war against the sultan.¹⁰⁷ An undated document, but which contains information pointing to the same period, was sent to the king of Hungary. The pope acknowledged Matthias Corvinus' important role in the victory obtained by the prince of Moldavia, congratulating him for the bravery and the expediency he had displayed.¹⁰⁸ The pope's perspective should be understood in the light of the special relation between Matthias Corvinus and Sixtus IV.¹⁰⁹ It foreshadows the Moldavian prince's condition as vassal to the king of Hungary, which would take shape in the subsequent months, straining further the Polish-Hungarian rivalry.

Although the pope's position suggests that the relation between the prince of Moldavia and the Holy See was to be established through the mediation of the king of Hungary, the situation changed once Venice began to develop its own diplomacy. On February 1475, Paulo Ognibene announced his superiors in Venice, that the "Wallachian," supported by Hungarians, Bohemians and Russians, had defeated 90,000 Turks, out of which 40,000 were dead and 4,000 taken prisoner, among them also being a pasha and the sultan's son.¹¹⁰ The information, considered excellent news (*optima novissima*), aroused enthusiasm in Venice, as it was also confirmed by other news coming from the Ottoman Empire. The Venetian ambassador in Constantinople quoted Mara Branković

105 Luigi Torelli, *Secoli agostiniani ovvero historia generale del Sagro Ordine Eremitano del gran dottore di Santa Chiesa S. Aurelio Agostino vescovo d'Hippona*, VII, (Bologna, 1682), 235: "... vi venne anche il Ré di Bosina, e Vallachia, il quale essendo molto vecchio anch' egli vi rimase con la Consorte. Aggiungiamo per ultimo, che quest' Anno Sancto fu di vantaggio felicitato da una gran rotta, che diede à Turchi Stefano Vaivoda, lò Palatino della Vallachia, e della Moldavia".

106 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/1, 8.

107 Edmund Martene (ed.), *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum, historicorum, dogmaticorum, moralium, amplissima collectio*, II, (Paris, 1724), 1490–1491.

108 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/1, 10.

109 Kovács, "Hungary, the Ottomans and the Holy See", 75.

110 Malipiero, *Annali veneti*, 110.

words, according to whom the defeat in Moldavia was one of the hardest ever suffered by the Ottomans.¹¹¹

Later, on 6 March 1475, the Venetian Senate decided to send Paulo Ognibene to Rome, to deliver the pope the message of the Moldavian prince. The embassy was instructed to convince the pope to send a *nuncio* to Moldavia, with a gift for the prince and with the promise of an important financial aid coming from the Holy See. Moreover, after returning to Rome, Ognibene was to be sent to Moldavia, accompanied by a physician, but until then a messenger was to be sent with a congratulatory letter for the prince from Venice.¹¹² On 15 March 1475, Ognibene had not yet left Venice, but he was back in the lagoon before 22 June 1475, when he received an important office for his diplomatic services.¹¹³ Such an appointment indicates that the plan to send him to Moldavia was abandoned for unknown reasons. For Venice, the victory against the Ottomans created an opportunity to bring into effect the plan of alliance with the Tartars, but, at the same time, it resumed peace negotiations with the sultan. However, at a diplomatic level Venice continued to encourage Prince Stephen to continue the war against the sultan. As a token of Republic's esteem some members of Stephen's family received shelter in Venice at the beginning of 1476 in a moment when Moldavia expected Mehmed II's retaliation. On the occasion the Venetian decided to pay *libras 776 scudi 9* to host in Treviso the family and the "knights" (*equis*) of the Moldavian Prince.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately the

111 "Geronimo Zorzi, Ambassador al Turco, scrive che avanti che 'l passasse nel paese de Turchi, se ha fatto conzar tre volte el salvo conduto, e fo satisfatto con gran prestezza: poi l'è andá dalla maregna del Turco, la qual ghe ha comunicá la rota de Valachia; e ghe ha ditto che le genti turchesche non ha mai habudo la maggior rota, e l'ha esortá a proseguir el so viazo con bon animo; perchè 'l Signor Turco ha causa de far la pace, e che 'l no poderave haver mazor occasion de negociar" (Malipiero, *Annali veneti*, 112). Obviously such statement is a *topos* being used each time an Ottoman army encountered a serious opposition.

112 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 6–7.

113 Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră III*, 34–38. Ognibene was appointed "massarius Officij iusticie Veteris".

114 The document was published long time ago but only recently it received the deserved analysis see Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, "Ungaria et Valachia. Promisiunile valaha ale Republicii Sfântului Marcu din ani 1470", in *Revista istorica* (forthcoming): "Consiliarii// Diebus proxime elapsis scriptum et mandatum fuit per dominium nostrum potestati et capitaneo Tarvisii quod pro expensis factis familie et equis Illustrissimi Vayvode Moldavie dari faceretur Bartholomeo hospiti ad Coronam in Mestre libri 776, scudi 9, uti constare per computum clare et lucide cognitum fuit, et, quoniam idem potestas noster scribit talem exbursationem et satisfactionem facere non potuisse in executionem mandatorum nostrorum, obstante lege capta in hoc Consilio, ne cuiquam per Cameram Tarvisii persolvi possit nisi captum fuerit per hoc Consilium, sub pena ducatorum mille, et con-

document offers no detail concerning Stephen's family and we ignored how long they remained in Venetian territory. However, such an exceptional gesture suggests how important the Moldavian involvement in the war was for the Serene Republic.

A Plan of the Annihilation of Mehmed II and the Fall of Caffa

From Stephen the Great's point of view, Venice's support and the alliance with the Tartars was a secondary issue: he considered Poland and especially Hungary's support more important to him. Stephen had a realistic assessment of his situation, as he was well aware of the forthcoming Ottoman invasion. According to an Ottoman chronicler, the sultan, "started himself this holy expedition, for the honor of Islam and to revenge the previous defeat of the Muslims."¹¹⁵ On 13 February 1475, Leonardo of Oretona sent a letter from Buda to Ferrara announcing that an Ottoman army of 200,000 men, led by the sultan, was prepared to launch a new expedition in Moldavia. Leonardo of Oretona was optimistic about the result, forecasting that the union of joint forces of the prince of Moldavia and the king of Hungary would bring an even greater victory than the previous one.¹¹⁶ Similar news about the sultan's preparations arrived from Ragusa, with information about a fleet of 600 galleys while towards the end of March, when a Florentine merchant from Constantinople provided information about the sultan's preparations in Adrianople.¹¹⁷

According to Dlugosz, Stephen the Great asked for the king of Poland's help. He requested the king send 2,000 pedestrians for the defense of Kilia and Akkerman and to give orders that the army from the southern parts of his kingdom be ready for battle and set up camp at Kamenets-Podolsky. The prince's plan was to lure the sultan all the way up to Kamenets-Podolsky, whereupon

veniat dignitati nostri domini ac equitati ut ipsi hospiti satisfiat, vadit pars quod scribi possit prefato potestati nostro quod suprascriptas libras 776, scudi 9 dare et numerare possit, non obstante lege predicta, sicut conveniens et honestum est pro dignitate et honore nostri domini.// De parte 95. De non 13. Non sinceri 6". The document is preserved in Archivio di Stato, Venice, ASVe, S. S., *Senato Terra*, reg. 31. 1473–1475 [1 martie 1473–28 februarie 1476], f. 125^v. We thank the authors for their accept to consult and quote their article before publication.

115 Mihai Guboglu and Mustafa Mehmed (eds.), *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, 1, (Bucharest, 1966), 458.

116 Manole Neagoe (ed.), *Războieni. Cinci sute de ani de la campania din 1476. Monografie și culegere de texte*, (Bucharest, 1977), 130–131.

117 Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 52–54.

the Polish and Moldavian armies were to surround him.¹¹⁸ Out of financial and political reasons, one being the turn of the Moldavian-Hungarian relations, King Casimir ignored the demand, considering it a result of the Moldavian prince's imagination.¹¹⁹ In fact, the king of Poland was interested in maintaining a peaceful attitude toward the sultan who, in August 1475, addressed him in terms of friendship and fraternity, encouraging him to preserve good relations between Poland and the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁰

Another failure of the prince of Moldavia was the attempt to conclude an anti-Ottoman alliance with the Genoese from Caffa. On 10 February 1475, the officials of the Crimean city reported to Genoa that Stephen the Great had sent an emissary to them, offering even reparations for the prejudices brought against the Genoese merchants, but they refused, because a treaty with Moldavia implied the enmity of the sultan and of the senior of Theodoro and Gothia.¹²¹

Despite their prudent attitude, the city of Caffa was to become the first victim of the Ottoman offensive. On 20 May 1475, the Ottoman fleet led by Ahmed Gedik pasha started off Constantinople heading toward Crimea.¹²² Exactly at the same time, Stephen the Great sent his brother-in-law, Alexander, to Crimea to take the fortress of Theodoro.¹²³ On 20 June 1475, the prince sent a message to the king of Hungary, letting him know that Alexander had conquered Theodoro/Mangup, "his paternal legacy." But, the ship which carried the information on the success also delivered bad news: after a three day siege, the Turks had conquered Caffa, and the Tartar khan from Crimea had bowed to the sultan. The message added that, after the conquest of Caffa, the Ottoman fleet headed toward Kilia and Akkerman, while the main Ottoman army was on its way toward Moldavia. As a result, the Moldavian prince urged the king of Hungary to hurry and to come to his support.¹²⁴

Stephen the Great did not know that the sultan, because of his illness, had changed his plan being compelled to stay in Constantinople. This crucial information was known in Buda and communicated to the duke of Milan on 23 June

118 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 531.

119 Boleslaw Stachon, *Polityka Polski wobec Turcyi i akcyi antyturckiej w wieku XV do utraty Kilii i Bialogradu (1484)*, Lwow, 1930, 172–173.

120 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 224.

121 Virginie Vasiliu, "Sur la seigneurie de "Teodoro" en Crimée au XV^e siècle, à l'occasion d'un nouveau document", *Mêlanges de l' Ecole Roumaine en France*, (Paris, 1929), 333.

122 Malipiero, *Annali veneti*, III.

123 Maria Magdalena Székely and Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina. O prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei*, (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2006), 47–48.

124 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 10–11.

1475.¹²⁵ Facing the imminence of the Ottoman attack, the prince of Moldavia direly needed the solidarity of the Christian princes. Shortly after the fall of Caffa, he also wrote to the great prince of Muscovy, Ivan III, invoking Greek-Orthodox solidarity. This time, the prince compared his realm to an island surrounded from two sides by the “evil infidels, and from three sides by people who call themselves Christians, but to me they are worse than the infidels.”¹²⁶ Writing in these terms to a sovereign whose relations with the Catholic world were quite tense, the prince underlined his confessional identity, a fact which excluded a possible acceptance of the Florentine Union in Moldavia. The text also expressed the disappointment caused by the manner in which the Catholic princes understood Christian solidarity.

The fall of Caffa,¹²⁷ on 6 June 1475, was another blow for the Christian world and, consequently, the pope’s calls to arms against the infidels became even more frequent. On 1 July 1475, when the news of the fall of Caffa reached Rome, in a letter to the marquis of Mantua, the pope was concerned for the fate of Moldavia. Given the fact that the doge of Venice informed him that the Ottomans were planning a great attack against Moldavia, Sixtus IV was trying to make the marquis of Mantua understand that not only Moldavia was in danger, but the entire Christian world. He was asking the marquis to financially support those who were facing the Turks at the eastern border of Christendom.¹²⁸

Resonating with the pope’s position, Moldavia’s closeness to Hungary became more and more obvious after the fall of Caffa. In spring 1475, King Matthias expressed his readiness to offer protection against the sultan in exchange for the acceptance of the Hungarian suzerainty.¹²⁹ On 12 July 1475, the prince of Moldavia issued an act by which he recognised himself as the king’s liege and feudatory to the Holy Crown. He admitted that the princes of Moldavia had owed loyalty to Hungary’s king and Holy Crown since the beginning, which was an inaccurate information, but it meant the admission of the

125 Iván and Albert, *Acta extera*, IV, 266.

126 *Исторические связи народов СССР и Румынии в XV- начале XVIII в.*, I, (Moscow, 1965), 61–63.

127 Matei Cazacu and Kéram Kévonian, “La chute de Caffa en 1475 a la lumière de nouveaux documents”, *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XVII/1 (1976): 495–538.

128 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 320.

129 Vilmos Fraknói (ed.), *Mátyás Király Levelei*, I, (Budapest, 1893), 313: “Ex declarari nutii et familiaris tui, qui per te cum litteris credentialibus ad nos destinatus fuit, intelleximus bonam voluntatem tuam et optimum animum, recuperatis jam, sicut intimas in maiori parte bonis et hereditatibus tuis, quas tyrannide et servitia Thurcorum imperatoris amiseras, nobis et sacre corone nostre serviendi, teque offere nos ad servitia, quecumque in illis partibus mandaremus, promptissimum et paratum”.

claims of Hungary's king at the expense of the Polish king. In the document the past dissensions between the king of Hungary and the Moldavian lord are also mentioned, pardoned by the king's benevolence. Stephen also engaged himself to fight by the king's side against the Ottomans and any other enemies he might have, with the exception of the king of Poland.¹³⁰

On 18 July 1475, the Moldavian emissaries paid homage to the Hungarian king, on this occasion also returning, as a sign of obedience, the king's flags and other effects captured by the Moldavian troops in 1467.¹³¹ On 15 August, King Matthias issued the diploma by which the prince of Moldavia and his country were accepted as servants of the Holy Crown. Stephen, his heirs, the boyars and the entire realm of Moldavia were forgiven for their past wrong deeds against the king. Stephen the Great obtained the protection of the king who engaged himself to participate personally in the military campaign, should the situation require it.¹³² On 3 November 1475, Matthias Corvinus ensured Sixtus IV that he would obey his advice to help the prince of Moldavia and that, on account of his military preparations, the sultan would not attack Moldavia that summer. The king reaffirmed his intention to defend not only Moldavia, which was now his vassal, but any Christian territory, asking for the Holy See's financial support.¹³³ In September 1475, King Casimir sent emissaries to Moldavia to receive the prince's oath of allegiance and, in the same month, representatives for the common Hungarian-Polish Diet aimed to solve the dispute over Russia and Moldavia were appointed. Invoking the Ottoman threat, the king of Hungary asked for a delay of these discussions,¹³⁴ thereby remaining sovereign over Moldavia.

Matthias Corvinus's intentions regarding the anti-Ottoman fight seemed very serious at the time. On 5 December 1475, Sebastian Badoer, the ambassador of Venice in Buda, informed the doge that the king was ready to send 15,000 men in the aid of prince Stephen.¹³⁵ Similar news came in February 1476 from Ragusa. The rumors suggested that the sultan postponed the campaign because of Hungarian support for the prince of Moldavia; nonetheless the same news stated that the sultan would cast aside such caution and would launch a

130 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, 331–332.

131 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 15.

132 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/1, 8–10.

133 Fraknói, *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis Epistolae*, 101–102.

134 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 535.

135 Iván and Albert, *Acta extera*, IV, 290.

massive offensive on the Danube.¹³⁶ Toward the end of 1475, Matthias Corvinus initiated an attack against the Ottomans, conquering the fortress of Sabac, on the south bank of the River Sava, after a six-week siege. Sabac was a wooden fortification made by the Ottomans a couple of years earlier, and its conquest was not an important victory, but the Hungarian propaganda presented it skillfully as such, inclusively with heroic poetry dedicated to this fight.¹³⁷

On 1 December 1475, in the bull *Catholice fidei defensionem*, Pope Sixtus IV renewed the topic of the Ottoman threat and decided that part of the money destined for the fight of the Castile and Leon kingdoms against the Muslims of Granada was to be directed towards the Apostolic Chamber and the struggle against the Ottomans.¹³⁸ A couple of days later, the pope commissioned the pontifical legate Balthasar of Piscia the mission to support the king of Hungary, the legate being entrusted to keep an eye on the peace between Hungary, Bohemia and Poland, and to ensure a smooth unfolding of the crusade.¹³⁹ The correspondence between Sixtus IV and Matthias Corvinus from early 1476, illustrate their special relationship and the pope's trust in the king's capacity to fight against the infidels.¹⁴⁰

Moldavia the "Gateway of Christendom"

Despite Hungarian support, the prince of Moldavia had serious concerns as the news arriving from the neighbouring territories were not good for him at all. In December 1475, after a half-year siege, the Crimean fortress of Theodoro fell into Ottoman hands. The Moldavian troops sent to help Alexander's fought until the fall of the last citadel but, because of starvation and an Ottoman ruse,

136 Amedeo Vigna (ed.), "Supplemento al codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la Signoria di San Giorgio (1453-1475)", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VII/2 (1879), 488-489.

137 Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 308.

138 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 321.

139 "... etiam auctoritate apostolica confirmandi vallandi et roborandi, seu quid aliud ad hoc nostrum propositum utile accomodum necessarium vel expediens inveniendi statuendi et firmandi; presertim, ut durante expeditione contra Turchos possint regna ipsa dominia et loca stabili quiete tranquillitate et securitate frui et gaudere, necnon sub censuris et penis ecclesiasticis et secularibus observari et exequi mandandi ac faciendi auctoritate prefata omnia et singula, qui inter predictas partes et eis adherentes aut habentes facultates ab eis firmata vel conclusa parte fuerint in premissis" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 228); Kalous, *Papežští legati*, 215-216.

140 Fraknói, *Mátyás Király Levelei*, I, 324-335.

the strong fortress fell. The senior of Theodoro surrendered to the Ottomans, being subsequently murdered, while his wife and daughters were sent to the sultan's harem.¹⁴¹ A letter of a Genoese from Pera, from May 1476, mentions a diplomatic action of the prince of Moldavia, which was to offer Ottoman prisoners captured in the previous year in exchange for the senior of Theodoro and his family but, because of an Ottoman stratagem, the action ended with the execution of the Ottoman prisoners before the eyes of the sultan's emissary.¹⁴² The incident proves that the tensions made the confrontation inevitable, and the negotiations were only a delay.

After the fall of Caffa, the king of Poland began to take Moldavia's prince appeals for help more seriously.¹⁴³ Since 1462 Caffa was under the sovereignty of the king of Poland,¹⁴⁴ and its conquest by the Ahmed Gedik pasha inflicted a loss of prestige for King Casimir. Even more harmful was the acceptance of Hungarian protection by the Moldavian lord. Many Polish nobles asked the king to take initiative and assume the defense of Moldavia, asserting that it was a lot easier to fight against the Ottomans in Moldavia now, than for the defense of their own territories later. The probability that the Ottoman Empire could reach the frontiers of the Polish realm produced anxiety which is evident even in the rhetorical exercise of Philippus Buonaccorsi-Callimachus.¹⁴⁵ The king's arguments, such as the lack of money or of the necessary troops and that a hasty war would end with a defeat, did not convince his counsellors. The political elite reproached the king about his passive attitude, because of which the kingdom fell into decay and ruin; they requested him to change his political

141 Székely and Gorovei, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina*, 48–57.

142 Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 55.

143 “Quamvis autem Lithuaniae barones suaderent maxime, ut Rex quam celerrime, Poloniae et Lithuaniae ac omnes terrar moueret, Turco occursurus. Se ea mente praeditos esse, ut malint contra Turcum pro focis Valachicis, quam Lithuanicis duellare, omnemque suam opera ultro pollicerentur” (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 531).

144 Marian Malowist, *Kaffa-Kolonia genueńska na Krymie i problem wschodni w latach 1453–1475*, (Warsaw, 1947), 177–178.

145 “Utile Valacho opem fere, sic enim non in Podolia, sed in Valachia bellum erit. Quod si non faciemus, non in Valachia, sed in Podolia tandem pugnabimus. Laudabile erit federatum tetrarcham tutari, ne in servitutum deveniat. Qoud si negligemus, libertatem regni prodere videbimur” (Casimir Felix Kumaniecki (ed.), *Philippi Callimachi rhetorica*, (Warsaw, 1950), 150; Șerban Papacostea, “Polonia și Moldova față cu primejdia otomană în a doua jumătate a secolului al xv-lea, opțiuni divergente și convergente: o însemnare a lui Filippo Buonaccorsi-Callimachus”, *Aut viam inveniam aut faciam. In honorem Ștefan Andreescu*, ed. Ovidiu Cristea, Petronel Zahariuc, Gheorghe Lazăr, (Iași, 2012), 33–34).

approach or to consider the possibility of investing a successor.¹⁴⁶ The tensions between the king and the Polish lords, especially with the bishop of Warmia, were also exploited by Matthias Corvinus who, on 2 April 1476, addressed one letter to Casimir and another one to the Polish Diet, invoking the necessity of the Christian solidarity in the fight against the enemies of the Cross.¹⁴⁷ Coming to the king of Hungary's aid, Balthasar of Piscia wrote to the bishop of Warmia from Buda,¹⁴⁸ informing him about the importance of maintaining the peace between the two kingdoms and that he was the messenger of the pope's bidding, having the necessary powers to protect the king of Hungary in the war recently started against the Ottomans.¹⁴⁹ It was a threat which, later on, the papal legate brought into effect. Under such circumstances, King Casimir was compelled to display favourable gestures concerning the fight against the Ottomans, but avoided any action which would have given satisfaction to his rival, the king of Hungary, who was recognised by the pope as champion of the anti-Ottoman fight. This fact explains the attitude adopted by Casimir on the issue of Moldavia's defense, giving the prince hope of a military support.

The Moldavian prince's attitude of questioning his allegiance to the king of Hungary can be related to the new situation. In spring 1476, two of Stephen the Great's emissaries were sent to Italy, and on that occasion this issue was discussed as well. The first envoy, Dorino Cattaneo, was a Genoese in the service

146 "Ampliori interitui, nisi se de torpore excusserit, moresque sui regiminis correxerit, propediem traducendum, qui etiam inter regnum Poloniae et Principatum Lithuaniae, que unire debuerat, ablata Lucensi tota et Podoliae parte terrarum, a Regno Poloniae, et in potestatem Lithuanicam translata, mucronem horrendum inter unitos populos, cognata ascies, morte sua secuta, collidendos, sciens volensque seruerit. Qui videns sibi et Regno suo ab oriente et occidente, austro et aquilone, impendere bella, pusillanimen se et ociosum monstrat. Ni sibi aliter consultat, aut in locum suum alium sirroget, quam celerrime per suam desidiam, et turpe regimen, etiam hoste externo non accedente, periturus" (Długossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 532).

147 "... quod profecto eo gravius ferimus, quo, impresenciarum adversus Turcos expositi rebusque publicis intenti, ab huiusmodi expedicione fidei hoc pacto provocabimur et molestabimur cum grandi tocius christianitatis iactura et rebus illis consulere cogere" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 230).

148 Marian Biskup and Karol Górski, *Kazimierz Jagiellończyk. Zbiór studiów o Polsce drugiej połowy XV wieku*, (Warsaw, 1987), 241–242.

149 "Habemus arma huic negotio sufficientia et incorruptibilia, si treuge sive pax temporalis, inite ad biennium inter suam serenitatem et serenissimum Polonie regem et eius primogenitum ac omnium eorum adherentes, non serventur ut ille, (sic) qui ... experietur tela nobis concessa ad defensionem serenissimi regis Ungarie et suorum adherencium, eo occupato contra Turchos, per se vel per suo duces, aut etiam in suis regnis pacifice quiescente" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 233).

of the prince, while the second, Peter, was a canonist sent to Rome, who had to be confirmed bishop of Moldavia, with the prince and Matthias Corvinus' recommendation. The Moldavian emissaries arrived in Venice at the end February or early March. On 15 March 1476, the Venetian Senate instructed his ambassador in Rome to support the mission of the Moldavian emissaries at the papal curia because Stephen of Moldavia was "a strong and warrior man."¹⁵⁰ At that moment, the Moldavian emissaries were no longer in Venice, their presence being attested at Florence on 10 March 1475. In that day, the leaders of the city recommended to their ambassador to Rome, Alamanno Rinuccini, to get in contact with Stephen's two emissaries and to plead before the pope the cause of the prince of Moldavia. The document mentions that Prince Stephen's two emissaries came from Venice and were received with all due attention and honor, in accordance with the customs of the city. The two men were reporting that without help their prince would be conquered by the Turks. Rinuccini was asked to support the two envoys in their efforts, but with no expenses whatsoever from the Florentine Republic.¹⁵¹ The envoys' passage through Florence is also confirmed in *The Book of Ceremonies* of the Florentine Republic;¹⁵² they are mentioned by the emissary of the duke of Milan.¹⁵³ Unlike the inexperienced manner in which, Stephen the Great announced to the world his victory against the Ottomans the previous year, this time the prince had prepared his diplomatic action thoroughly, making sure of the support of Venice and Florence for the discussions with the Holy See.

The mission of the Moldavian envoys in Rome had two objectives. The first one, that is the confirmation of Peter as bishop of Moldavia, was a mere formality. On 20 March 1476, Sixtus IV wrote to Stephen the Great, praising the prince's deeds for the defense of Christendom and informing him that he accepted the confirmation of bishop Peter.¹⁵⁴ The second objective, which was getting financial support from the pope, sent directly to the prince and not through the king of Hungary, was a more delicate subject which needed more

150 Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră III*, 38: "virum potentem et bellicosum".

151 V. Makuscev (ed.), *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium Vicinorumque Populorum*, 1/1, (Warsaw, 1874), 534.

152 Francesco Filarete and Angelo Manfidi (eds.), *The Libro Cerimoniale of the Florentine Republic*, (Geneve, 1978), 115.

153 "Post hec stando cosi alquanto con le loro Signorie me dixeno a proposito de certi ambaxatori che sono passati de qui: che sono ambasadori del Duca Stefano Molduense, de quali l'uno se chiama Domino Stefano, vescovo Molduense et l'altro Domino Dorino Cathaneo, per natione sia genuese" (Alexandru Simon, "Valahii de la Marea Neagră și valahii din Ungaria în cruciada anului 1476", *Revista Istorică*, XXIII (2012), 3–4: 281).

154 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 11/1, 13–14.

negotiating, as the existing documents show. On 3 April, the pope addressed a new letter to the prince, informing him that he decided to absolve the bishop of Moldavia of the payment of the taxes to the Apostolic Chamber. However, the pope added, the requested financial support could not be granted as the funds required by the war against the Ottomans had already been sent to the king of Hungary. Nevertheless, Sixtus IV ensured Stephen that at least a part of the money will be directed toward the Moldavian realm. Moreover, as a sign of benevolence, the pope granted to the new appointed Moldavian bishop the right to sell Jubilee Year indulgences, the incomes being designated for the needs of the "holy expedition."¹⁵⁵ At the same time, a letter of Sixtus IV to the king of Hungary stipulated that a part of the money sent to support the fight against the infidels should be directed to Moldavia. Matthias was asked to ensure the protection of his vassal and to oversee that he did not reach a deal with the enemy.¹⁵⁶

It is clear from the letter that, although he had the possibility, Sixtus IV refused to allocate a part of the collected sum to Stephen the Great despite the emissaries' pleas and the threat of a Moldavian peace with the sultan. The pope granted full credit to the king of Hungary, giving him the main role in the crusade. On 9 April 1476, the pope published, as a compensation, the *Pastoris aeterni* bull, whereby offering Moldavia the plenary indulgence of the Jubilee Year, the collected money being thus to be used by the prince for the "holy crusade." So, at least theoretically, the cathedral church of Moldavia became, for an entire year beginning with the feast of the saints Peter and Paul in 1476, an important temporary pilgrimage destination of Catholic Christendom in the previous year with the pilgrims obtaining the same indulgence they would have received when they visited the papal churches in Rome. Moreover, the bishop of Moldavia was empowered to extend the Jubilee Year indulgence to other churches in Moldavia and to send copies of the bull so that the number of those receiving the indulgence would be as high as possible.¹⁵⁷

The pope's initiative had no effect whatsoever because the indulgences, tightly interconnected with the concept of Purgatory, had no value at all for

155 "Nam ut intelligas, cupere nos ex parte, qua possumus etiam nunc subvenire, concessimus indulgentias Iubilei in terris tuis omnibus illis, qui dimidium erogabunt pecuniae, eam justa eorum conditiones ad almam urbem nostram veniendo et redeundo verisimiliter potuissent expendere, ut et hinc quoque tibi et tuis accrescat subsidium, et commodius sanctae expeditoni possis intendere, eta in omnibus, in quibus tibi poterimus prodesse, faciemus semper animo libentissimo (Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 11/1, 14–15).

156 Fraknói, *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis Epistolae*, 118.

157 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, 11/2, 237–240.

the Greek-Orthodox Christian faithful. Furthermore, they were inaccessible for the Catholics as well since Moldavia was to be the target of the Ottoman attack. Some asserted that the granting of indulgences for Moldavia was owed to the fact that the prince of Moldavia, a country that had never rejected the Union of Florence, considered, despite all the Greek-Orthodox influences which prevailed in his country, that the pope was the natural leader of the West.¹⁵⁸ Another opinion, which seems more realistic, argues that the granting of indulgences for Moldavia was based on the confusing situation created in Rome by the confirmation of Bishop Peter, the pope assuming that Stephen the Great was a Catholic prince.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, from the discussions within the Apostolic Chamber we notice that little was known about Moldavia in Rome,¹⁶⁰ but it is also true that granting of crusade bull to Moldavia represented a diplomatic solution for the pope who was thus able to refuse to send there subsidiaries from the first collection of money.

Obviously, the Moldavian envoys were disappointed with the result and on the way back they stopped in Venice to express their discontent. The debates of the Venetian Senate from 6 May 1476, registered this point. The prince's envoys complained that all they received from the pope were vague promises and that all the collected money was sent to the king of Hungary. They insisted on the fact that the prince was not a vassal to the Hungarian king and that he would continue the war with the Ottomans only if he received the required financial support.¹⁶¹ The Moldavian emissaries' assertion regarding Moldavian-Hungarian relations must be understood in the sense that Moldavia was not an integral part of the kingdom of Hungary, not as a denial of the vassalage. Consequently, the prince did not hesitate to proclaim himself "servant of the king and of the Holy Crown."¹⁶²

The Venetians treated the prince's warning on the possibility of concluding a peace with the sultan more seriously.¹⁶³ They assured the envoys that the

158 Halecki, "Sixte IV et la Chrétienté orientale", 255.

159 C. Auner, "Episcopia de Baia (Moldaviensis)", *Revista Catolică*, (1915), 1: 122.

160 Joannes Lisowski (ed.), *Polonica ex libris "obligationem et solutionem" Camerae Apostolicae ab a. 1373* (Rome, 1960), 206, 215 and 228.

161 "Postea altero die iter comparentes declarare nixi sunt Stephanum praedictum Regi Hungariae in nullo suppositum, sed dominum provinciae et gentium suarum, perseveratum in bello si subvenietur, sin aliter consulturum per alium modum rebus suis" (*Iorga, Veneția în Marea Neagră III*, 39).

162 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 337.

163 "L'é da procieder in questa facenda grave et consultamente et far quella estimation del Duca Stephano Vayvoda de Mondavia che se conviene ala condition et qualita soa et che richiede el favor che 'l dicto signor puol conferir ale cose christiane contra el Turco et ben

Republic would plead with the pope that a part of the 100,000 ducats be sent to the Moldavia, although the chances of convincing him were slim. On 17 May 1476, the doge Andrea Vendramin appointed Emanuele Gerardo as Venetian ambassador in Moldavia. Gerardo was instructed to travel together with the Moldavian emissaries to assure Stephen the Great of Venice's support and to convince him to continue the fight against the Ottomans. He also had the mission of gathering information about the prince's military strength and about his relations with the king of Hungary, the understanding of which was crucial for the Venetians. Furthermore, the emissary was to ask for the prince's opinion about the prospect of an alliance with the Tartars, which was still considered in Venice. A last aspect concerned the recognition of the jurisdiction held by the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeronimus Lando, in Poland, Russia and Moldavia,¹⁶⁴ which would have equaled as a recognition of the Florentine Union, although the request was more a favor to Jeronimus Lando,¹⁶⁵ a member of a distinguished Venetian family. Nevertheless, the context was far too complicated to leave any room for such issues.

The Campaign of Mehmed II in Moldavia

Mehmed II had started the campaign with an offensive directed simultaneously in Albania, Croatia and Bosnia for the recovery of the fortress Sabac.¹⁶⁶ On 23 May, 1476, Venice received disturbing news were from Istanbul. The sultan headed towards Belgrade, but had changed his plans upon the return of his emissary from Moldavia. He had asked the prince of Moldavia to surrender the fortress of Kilia and the Ottoman prisoners, to send one of his sons as a hostage, the pay the tribute for the past three years, and to redeem the Genoese prisoners from Caffa, who had fled on a ship the previous year into Moldavia and

considerar et ponderar le parole usate per j suo ambassadori" (Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră III*, 40).

164 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 11–14.

165 Jeronimus Lando, bishop of Crete and, from 1474, Latin patriarch of Constantinople (C. Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica*, II, (Monasterii, 1914), 135 and 139) in 1459 and 1462 was appointed pontifical legate in the problem of the war between Poland and the Teutonic Order, on this occasion arriving to Poland, at King Casimir's court. He cut a bad figure in Poland, seen as he was as a merchant who followed a sacerdotal career as a penitence for his crimes (Victor Weintraub, "Renaissance Poland and Antemurale Christianitatis", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, VIII–IX/2 (1979–1980): 921–922). For more details see Smolucha, *Politika Kurii Rzymskiej*, 191–198 and 228–242; Kalous, *Papežští legati*, 196–201.

166 Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 349 and 354.

who were considered the sultan's slaves. Stephen the Great refused the terms and commanded that the Turkish prisoners be executed before the emissary's eyes. The sultan started toward Moldavia while a powerful Ottoman fleet was prepared to besiege the fortresses Kilia and Akkerman.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, an emissary sent by the king of Poland reached the sultan in the Ottoman camp established at Varna. The ambassador, Marcin Wrocimowski, had been a captive of the Ottomans after the failure of the crusade of 1444, and had learned Turkish. He was thus returning to the places where he had been held captive to ask the sultan, in the name of his king, not to attack Moldavia, whose prince was under the protection of the king of Poland. The sultan's letter, from 19 May 1476, does not mention anything about the campaign in Moldavia, being strictly formal and mentioning only the good relations and the brotherly friendship between the two sovereigns.¹⁶⁸

According to Dlugosz, Mehmed II expressed his readiness to put an end to the military expedition should the Moldavian prince accept the aforementioned conditions.¹⁶⁹ Although he warned the king about the danger, the Polish emissary had the opportunity to observe that Mehmed II had no intention to make Moldavia an Ottoman province, but only to replace Stephen the Great with a candidate to the throne residing at his court.¹⁷⁰ The sultan's strategy proved to be important in the subsequent evolution of the events.

Under the influence of the new information gathered, Emanuele Gerardo received a new mission. On 25 June 1476, the Venetian Senate instructed the emissary to get in contact with the Great Hoard's khan by any means, so that he would come to the prince of Moldavia's help.¹⁷¹ The same errand was given by the doge, on July 1476, to the Venetian emissary who was sent along with the Great Hoard khan's envoy. He was supposed to convince the khan to come to the prince of Moldavia's aid or to attack other territories controlled by the Ottomans,¹⁷² creating thereby a powerful diversion against the sultan.

The aforementioned sources expressed an optimistic view regarding the prince's chances of defeating the strong army of the sultan, optimism also reflected in some documents issued by Moldavian chancellery. On 5 June 1476, Stephen wrote to the Saxon leaders of the city of Braşov (Kronstadt)

167 Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 56.

168 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 243–244.

169 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 544–545.

170 Ștefan S. Gorovei and Maria-Magdalena Székely, *Princeps omni laude maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare*, (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2005), 148.

171 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 18–19.

172 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 14–15.

in Transylvania, letting them know that he was starting the war against the Ottomans with all his military power and asking them to communicate all the news regarding the movements of the sultan and his allies.¹⁷³ As for the latter, the Polish envoy had already found out that it was Laiotă Basarab, the prince of Wallachia who, on this occasion, was fighting alongside the sultan and the khan of the Crimean Tartars, information that would soon reach Stephen the Great's ears, too.

For Eminek Mirza, an incursion into Moldavia represented an opportunity for revenge. After an invasion in Moldavia in 1471, he was caught by the Moldavian prince and held captive until 1473, when he managed to escape.¹⁷⁴ The prince of Wallachia had a completely different motivation. Established on the throne by the prince of Moldavia, Laiotă Basarab had fought on Stephen the Great's side in the previous year, but after his confirmation as a ruler by the sultan he switched over to the sultan's side. Laiotă Basarab's attitude was partly prompted by the Moldavian-Wallachian discord about their common border.

The prince of Moldavia was aware of the Wallachian change of camp. On 11 June 1476, in another letter sent to Braşov, Stephen the Great asked the leaders of the city to stop any trade with the neighbouring Wallachia and to forbid especially the export of grains and other victuals, as the Wallachians were not only his enemy, but also the enemies of all Christendom.¹⁷⁵ In this way, the prince was cutting the supply line of the Ottoman army from Transylvania, which took place through the agency of the prince of Wallachia. This was an important aspect of warfare at the time, since the provisioning of the sultan's great army was already facing difficulties.

From Varna, the Ottoman army's advance toward Moldavia was slowed also by an invasion of locusts which destroyed the food of horses and men, attacking even the bags of breadcrumbs. The army was encountering further difficulties in finding enough supplies of fresh water. After crossing the Danube, the Ottomans discovered an even starker landscape. At the prince's order, the grains and grass had been cut and burned, so that the ashes and the heat were

173 "Noveritis, amici nostri dilecti, quod nos una cum serenissimo domino nostro rege abemus guerram cum infidis Turcis, et nos iam summus in campo cum omni potencia nostra et perginus super Turcas. Ergo rogamus amicitias vestras, quod nos omni ora avisetis cum novitatibus ex parte Turcorum et eciam ex parte omniorum, qui cum infidelibus Turcis sociantur" (Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare*, II, 339–340).

174 Pienaru, "Proiectul scitic": 129–130.

175 "Eciam rogamus amicitias vestras ut faciatis amore nostri et triticum vel alia comestibilia at terram Tansalpinam non permitatis ducy, quia ipsi cupiunt periculum nostrum et tocius Christianitatis, et sunt subditi Turcorum" (Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare*, II, 341).

affecting men and horses.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the crossing of the Danube in early July¹⁷⁷ proved to be easy, thanks to the surprise-element prepared by the sultan, namely the attack of the Tartars from Crimea. According to Balthasar of Piscia, early in July the news of the Tartars' attack from the north arrived, a fact which forced Stephen to set off with an army against them, leaving only a guard of 1,000 horsemen at the Danube. The Tartars' army, estimated to 30,000 horsemen, was chased for two days, but it managed to retreat with minimal losses.¹⁷⁸ The fast raid reached its purpose, facilitating the Danube crossing by the sultan, affecting the Moldavian troops' morale, and consequently compelling the prince to reconsider his strategy.

Stephen the Great's strategy, established already in the previous year, was to lure the sultan as deep as possible into Moldavian territory and to surround him, harassing the Ottoman army permanently, but without initiating a decisive battle. The ideal place for this plan was the area between the rivers Moldavia and Siret, a true "cage" according to Dlugosz, where there were strong fortresses, prepared to resist a prolonged siege. The arrival of the Hungarian armies from southern Moldavia and of the Polish ones from the north was to enclose the circle, whereby the Ottoman army was going to be annihilated and the sultan taken captive. The Tartars' attack had not been taken into account, a move which changed the initial plan. According to the report written by a *familiarus* of Vlad the Impaler,¹⁷⁹ Stephen the Great divided his army, stopping at the confluence of Siret with Moldavia with some six thousand men, while the main army, estimated at 60,000 fighters, was placed in the area between Siret and Prut, to counterattack a new Tartar attack. This one occurred quite quickly, this time from the southern area of Moldavia, but the Crimean Tartars were not as lucky as before. The army of the prince defeated them close to Akkerman, thereby stopping their junction with the Ottoman army. These events are also confirmed by Eminek Mirza's letter to the sultan, from which we learn about the death of two of the khan's brothers. On their return from Moldavia, the Tartars of Crimea were attacked by the khan of the Great Horde, so they were not able to turn against Moldavia.¹⁸⁰ It is difficult to appreciate

176 Donaldo da Lezze, *Historia Turchesca*, ed. I. Ursu, (Bucharest, 1910), 87–88.

177 Radu Rosetti, *Istoria artei militare a românilor până la mijlocul veacului al XVII-lea*, (Bucharest, 1947), 221.

178 Krzysztof Baczkowski, "Nieznane listy Baltazara z Piscii do papieża Sykstusa IV z lat 1476–1478 ze zbiorów weneckich", *Prace Historyczne*, 89 (1989): 246.

179 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 21–22.

180 Mustafa A. Mehmet (ed.), *Documente turcești privind istoria României*, I, (Bucharest, 1976), 5.

in what measure such an attack was provoked by the diplomatic action of Venice or by Stephen's own schemes. A letter of Eminek Marza, addressed to Mehmed II in May 1476, suggested that Stephen the Great had freed the khan's brother, who was held captive in Moldavia, so he would be able to compete for the rulership of the Crimean Khanate.¹⁸¹

Meanwhile, the Ottoman army was engaged in pursuing the army of the prince. When he arrived near the fortress Neamț, the prince occupied a defensive position in a narrow area flanked with woods named Pârâul Alb (later Râzboieni). The plan was to start a fight only after the Hungarian army led by Stephen Bathory and Vlad the Impaler would enter Moldavia, but it could not be adhered to. The Ottomans advanced with high caution, suspecting a possible trap set up by Stephen the Great. In the afternoon of 26 July 1476, the prince initiated an attack against the Ottoman avant-garde, led by Suleyman pasha, but the numerical superiority of the Ottomans convinced the prince to retreat toward the fortified positions. Shortly after that, the entire Ottoman army arrived at the battlefield, attacking the positions occupied by Moldavians. Stephen the Great relied on the force of his artillery.¹⁸² Under the bombardment of volleys, the Janissaries, famous for their courage, threw themselves to the ground. The sultan had to step in personally to reestablish the order and to start moving against the Moldavian artillery's positions.¹⁸³ The loss of the cannons made the battle unequal. Overwhelmed by the Ottomans' numerical superiority, the Moldavians retreated into the forest. The Ottoman victory was certain, but far from being decisive it was compared to the Ottoman defeat from the previous year. To amplify its effect, Mehmed II had the Moldavian dead beheaded, and the skulls were put into a pile.¹⁸⁴ The sultan also granted his army three days of rest.

Later on, the prince of Moldavia built a church consecrated to the Archangel Michael, on the field of battle,¹⁸⁵ and the inscription mentioned the defeat: "by the will of God, the Christians were defeated by the infidels."¹⁸⁶ It is a question why, contrary to the initial plan, Stephen decided to engage in battle with the Ottoman army. The most likely reason was the presence inside the sultan's camp

181 Pienaru, "Proiectul scitic": 129–130.

182 Donaldo da Lezze, *Historia Turchesca*, 90.

183 Guboglu and Mehmet, *Cronici turcești*, I, 322–324.

184 *Ibid.*, 128.

185 Gh. I. Cantacuzino, "Biserica lui Ștefan cel Mare din Râzboieni—monument comemorativ", *Memoria Antiquitatis*, IV–V (1972–1973): 232–234.

186 M. Berza (ed.), *Repertoriul monumentelor și obiectelor de artă din timpul lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Bucharest, 1958), 148.

of a pretender to the throne of Moldavia. The effect of the Tartars' first attack and the continuous retreat before the Ottoman army demoralised the troops. Given these facts, the prince was forced to find some measures to strengthen the loyalty of his subjects. Some documents of the time reflect the fact that the prince was challenged by some of his subjects. News received in Poland, in August 1476, underlined that Stephen was abandoned by some of his men who accused him of tyranny. The same word was used by a proclamation of the sultan. Mehmed II claimed that he was not coming against the Moldavians, but against their leader, an unworthy tyrant. Once the Moldavians abandoned Stephen, the sultan was prepared to leave Moldavia. It was a subtle propaganda aimed to win the war by sedition, by destroying the ties between the prince and his subjects.¹⁸⁷ A report of Stephen Bathory to the king of Hungary, from 25 August 1476, confirms this information. Arriving at the boundary between Hungary and Moldavia, Bathory learned from Stephen the Great himself about the sultan's intention to enthrone a new prince in Moldavia, the news confusing the Hungarian army. This confusion was also created by the fact that Bathory learned only four days before writing the letter that Stephen the Great was still alive,¹⁸⁸ a detail which mirrors the confusion created in the Christian camp after the battle of Războieni.

The information was partially true, because Moldavia continued to make a stand. After the victory against the prince, the sultan sieged the fortresses of Neamț and Suceava, the latter being the princely residence and its conquering was absolutely necessary for the pretender's enthronement. The garrisons resisted the siege,¹⁸⁹ their determination being strongly connected to the initial fight plan.¹⁹⁰ The actions against Akkerman and Kilia did not bring any success either, especially after the Ottoman fleet was severely affected by a storm.

187 "Sed, quod peius est, tota illa Walachie provincia et communitates, suo monarcho tyrannidem pala obicientes et serviciem suam exprobantes, ad illum confluere penitus detractarunt, ymo ab illius obediencia de facto se substraxerunt, allegantes, quod nunquam se ut dominum sed solummodo pro lictore et eorum carnifice se gerebat. Quod hostis subadoratus (*sic*) wlgatissimam emisit famam. Quod nequaquam contra gentem, sed adversus gentis Walachie tam inmanem tortorem in tanto robore dumtaxat adventasset et, ne singullatim singula attingere oporteat, Turcus ipse non solum armis, sed eciam, si possibile foret ipsis coloribus Stephanum wayvodam conficere machinatur" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 246).

188 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 23–24.

189 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 156–157.

190 Donaldo da Lezze, *Historia Turchesca*, 91.

Meanwhile Stephen the Great, retreated to the north close to the Polish border, gathered a new army and asked again for the king of Poland's help.¹⁹¹ King Casimir's attitude was inexplicable to his contemporaries, because the king made preparations for sending troops to Stephen's aid, but the army never left for Moldavia. Even though he knew about the sultan's expedition, the king eventually went to Prussia to settle disagreements with the Teutonic Order and with the bishop of Warmia. At the beginning of August, the king returned and summoned a diet of the Kingdom at Piotrkow, where it was decided to call to arms the army of the southern kingdom and to camp it near Kamenets-Podolsky, under the command of Paul Jassyenski.¹⁹²

On 21 August 1476, the king granted to the citizens of Lwow a tax exemption for eight years, with the purpose of rebuilding the fortifications of the city, which had been weakened due to the attacks of the Tartars and Turks coming from Moldavia. At the same time, King Casimir provided an extraordinary contribution for the defense of Moldavia and Podolia, as we learn from the letter addressed to the merchants of Krakow in October 1476, who were assured that the new tax would not become permanent.¹⁹³

The concentration of the military forces created, in Dlugosz's opinion, a ridiculous situation: because of the extended station in the camp, the Polish army was doing nothing but inflict damages to the local inhabitants. Also, it could not answer the calls of the Moldavian prince, because it was waiting for the king, and could not retreat either without his command.¹⁹⁴ King Casimir's attitude can be explained by the situation of the Polish-Lithuanian union. In Prussia, the Teutonic Order threatened to abandon the loyalty to the Crown, in the east Moscow was preparing the second war for Novgorod, and in the west Poland had great issues with Hungary. A help offered to the prince of Moldavia meant war with the Ottoman Empire and with the Tartars from Crimea; King Casimir could not afford such a conflict. Before the Ottoman campaign, the Tartar khan had sent a clear message to the king: should he help in any way the prince of Moldavia, he would become the Horde's greatest enemy, but withholding from any help, he would be treated as a friend.¹⁹⁵ Confronted with

191 Baczkowski, "Nieznane listy": 247.

192 Dlugossi, *Historiae Polonicae*, II, 547.

193 *Akta grodzkie i ziemskie z czasów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z archiwum tak zwanego bernardyńskiego we Lwowie*, VI, (Lwow, 1876), 185–186.

194 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 547–548.

195 Mustafa Mehmet, "La politique ottomane à l'égard de la Moldavie et du Khanat de Crimée vers la fin du règne du sultan Mehmed II « le Conquerant »", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XIII (1974), 3: 527.

these political realities, the king was only apparently preoccupied to fight against the enemies of Christendom and for the glory of the crusade. However, although he gave precedence to the interests of his realm, he could not adopt such a position openly, not even in front of his own subjects.

For Dlugosz, the king's behavior represented a great disappointment, because he had let "the beast" escape from its "cage."¹⁹⁶ Confronted with the lack of food and with disease, but mostly for fear of being surrounded, after receiving the news that the Hungarian army had entered Moldavia, Mehmed II decided to immediately retreat from Moldavia without fulfilling any of his objectives. While the Ottoman army's retreat may have resembled a flight,¹⁹⁷ Mehmed II claimed victory nevertheless, issuing several *fetih-name*. These, however, lack the usual details which illustrate the complete victory against the enemy.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, Mehmed II appointed Sinan Rakkas as san-cak of Siliistra and gave him the mission of organizing plunder expeditions in Moldavia,¹⁹⁹ as retaliation after the failed campaign led by the sultan.

One Battle, More Victories

Mehmed II's enemies did not miss the opportunity to claim, in contrast, their success and, in late August, victory was already being celebrated. According to Balthasar of Piscia's report, in Poland religious ceremonies in honor of Vlad the Impaler's victory against the Turks were organised. In Eger, Hungary, a religious procession was organised on August 21; on this occasion the king's letter announcing the defeat of 13,000 Turks by the prince of Moldavia was read aloud.²⁰⁰ This signifies that King Matthias had announced the victory, even before the Hungarian army led by Stephen Bathory entered Moldavia, that is after

196 "Poterat tunc quidem Turcus, cum omni potentia sua, quasi fera in cassibus deprehensa, clade magna et per potenciam Casimiri Poloniae Regis et suarum gentium, obrui et funesta Valachiae vastatio, in illum retorqueri. Sed dum nemo esset, qui vincere hostem et iniquitate locorum et fame pesteque fractum, vellet (sive occupatio illa fuerit, sive cunctatio Regis et suorum, nam pusillanimitatem suspicare turpe iudico) bellua illa e manibus elapsa est et perpetua gloria Regis et Polonorum neglecta" (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 546–547).

197 Neagoe, *Războieni*, 93–94.

198 Mihai Guboglu, "Izvoare turco-persane privind relațiile lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Imperiul Otoman", *Revista Arhivelor*, LIX (1982), 2: 139–144.

199 Nagy Pienaru, "Un document otoman necunoscut din 1476", *Revista Istorică*, XIII (2002), 1–2: 229–241.

200 Baczkowski, "Nieżnani listy": 247.

25 August 1476. The explanation lies with the fact that a part of the Hungarian army, led by Vlad the Impaler and Vuk Branković, entered Moldavia later on and, after 15 August 1476, alongside the Moldavian prince's army engaged in a battle against six Ottoman army units.²⁰¹ Very likely such news aroused enthusiasm, but it faded away after the retreat of the Ottoman army from Moldavia. It is certain that the information about the defeat of the Ottomans circulated in Buda but, on 17 September 1476, the duke of Milan's emissary at Buda refuted the news put forth by the Venetian ambassador.²⁰² In early September, the version which claimed victory against the Turks was replaced with the communication about the junction between the Hungarian and the Moldavian armies. On 8 September 1476, Giustiniano Cavitello, also responsible for misinformation about the victory, told the duke of Milan about the Ottomans' disarrayed retreat from Moldavia and Wallachia, fleeing from their combined Christian armies of 110,000 troops, in the author's opinion the most powerful army in the world.²⁰³

Emanuele Gerardo, the Venetian emissary to Moldavia, also sent a report about the events. Based on his information, on 23 September 1476, the Senate asked the Venetian envoy to Rome to confirm with the Holy See that it would continue efforts for ending disputes between Hungary and Poland and to proclaim the crusade in Transylvania and Moldavia.²⁰⁴ Balthasar of Piscia revealed to the pope the frictions between Hungary and Poland,²⁰⁵ how their worsening had influenced events, and how differently the two kings described

201 Ștefan Andreescu, "L'action de Vlad Țepeș dans le Sud-Est de l'Europe en 1476", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, xv (1977), 2: 268–269.

202 "Scrisse lo oratore de Venetiani che el Valacho havea dato una rotta ad octo millia Turchi, quali erano andati cum certi navilii et galie per expugnare una bastia che faceva el dicto Valacho su el Danubio, e questa tal novella non è vera, mà falsissima e" (Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 57).

203 "Sono etiam venute ozi lettere d' uno altro capitaneo de Sua Maestà che' l' Turco in totum s' è partito de Moldavia, cioè Valachia et cum confusione ha passato el Danubio. Io ne scrisse a Vostra Excellentia, ma le lettere havute confirmano che è bona nova. Le gente della Maestà del Re che sono XL mila persone, sono uniti tutti con il Valacho, si che non temono il mondo; sono piu di 110 mila persone et etiam credo che in fra 8 giorni omnino la Maestà del Re personaliter anderà a Belgrado, et credo sentirà Vostra Excellentia. che' l farà qualche facto e questo fa senza fallo li denari mandati de Italia etc." (Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 24–25).

204 "Ad haec ambo probaremus etiam publicationem crutiatae in partibus illis Transilvanis et Moldaviensibus, et alibi, ubi prodesset rebus christianis posset" (Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 26).

205 Baczkowski, "Nieżnani listy": 242–245.

the Ottoman campaign in Moldavia. Poland accused Matthias of appropriating 200,000 ducats, without honoring his engagements. Whereas he was boasting that the sultan retreated from Moldavia thanks to him, the king of Hungary proved incapable of defending his own realm against the Ottoman attack.²⁰⁶ After the retreat from Moldavia, the sultan did not disband his army after arriving to Adrianople, but after ten days' rest, he started toward Smederevo, a move which created serious difficulties for Hungary.²⁰⁷

Matthias Corvinus invoked, in turn, the difficulties he encountered and the lack of support from the other Christian princes in the fight against the Ottomans. Such claims underlined the contrast thus between the others' passivity and his own efforts. In a letter to the duke of Saxony from 15 November 1476, the king provided his own version of the campaign in Moldavia. In his opinion, the prince of Moldavia, too confident in his own strength, entered into a fight with the Ottoman army when he should have waited for the Hungarian troops. When the sultan learned that 60,000 warriors were heading from Hungary toward Moldavia he was so terrified that he fled Moldavia and did not stop until he reached Constantinople.²⁰⁸ With such a statement there was no need to explain neither the delay in action of the Hungarian armies, nor the fact that the plan to surround the sultan had failed, because the Ottoman army's retreat was presented as a victory of the king of Hungary. Furthermore, in order

206 "Reversionem autem eius in suam laudem traducens, metu processus sui, illum scriptis suis vulgavit non revertisse sed fugisse. quapropter et papa quartus Sixtus et Ferdinandus Napuliae rex et omnes principes et comunitates Italie, preter solum Mediolani ducum, qui se ludificari non permisit, collacione facta, ducenta milia aureorum ad conterendum Turcum sibi transmittunt, qui illis et victoria de Turco et illius perpetuum repromittebat exterminium" (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 548).

207 Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 352–353.

208 "Postquam vero copias nostras. quas ad regna maioris minoresque Valachiae tutanda transmiseramus ad nos revocavimus, pontes super Danubio et Zavo fluminibus extruximus et ad invadendum denuo hostem ipsiusque regnum nos paravimus; ipse ut est potentissimus mirabilem brevi congescit exercitum, castra metarique coepit et quo nos diverteremur intendere, cumque cerneret se per nos, quemadmodum superiori anno, fatigari et nostra cunctatione plurimis damnis et gravissimis expensis affici, tradente sibi transitum perfido Bozard regni Transalpini waivoda, Moldaviam invasit, waivodam, qui nimis propriis viribus confisus, non expectato exercitu nostro, configere voluit, postravit coepitque civitatem et castrum Nemezc obsidione cingere ac bombardis et machinis oppugnare, contra quem duos imperatores gentium nostrarum cum circiter sexaginta milibus hominum transmisimus. Hos ubi ille appropriare percepit, obsidione soluta, relictis tormentis et multis impedimentis, turpem se convertem in fugam, nec respiravit, donec iter, quod pluribus hebdomadis intrando absolverat, triduo confecit rursusque Danubium remeavit, nec desitit quo ad Constantinopolem rediit (Fraknói, *Mátyás Király Levelei*, I, 355).

emphasise his merits, King Matthias willingly diminished the role played by the Moldavian prince, for instance in the case of the campaign in Wallachia. In November 1476, the Hungarian and Moldavian armies entered in Wallachia to replace Laiotă Basarab with Vlad the Impaler. On 4 December 1476, the letter of the royal captain Stephen Bathory arrived in Buda, wherein the events from Wallachia were summarised. The king sent a letter to the papal legate immediately, which was then copied by Giustiniano Cavitello and sent to the duke of Milan, along with the information learned from the king's envoy. According to Cavitello, Stephen the Great and Vlad the Impaler had fought with Laiotă and an army of 18,000 Turks whom they defeated; after a siege of fifteen days the princely residence was conquered and Vlad the Impaler enthroned as prince of Wallachia. Afterward, the lords of Moldavia and Wallachia made a mutual vow to maintain peace and unity.²⁰⁹ By contrast, Mathias Corvinus' version, as it was preserved in a letter to the pope from 8 December 1476, does not credit Stephen the Great with any role in the unfolding of events, mentioning only that the fight with the infidels took place before the arrival of the Moldavian prince.²¹⁰

The reports about the events from 1476 continued into early 1477. Philippus Buonaccorsi-Callimachus was sent to Italy to get financial support for the king of Poland's fight against the Turks and the Tartars.²¹¹ The mission was tightly connected to the Venetian project of crusade in the east, which needed good cooperation between Hungary, Poland, Moldavia and the Great Horde. The idea was presented on various occasions to the king of Poland by the Venetian emissaries.²¹² In order to accomplish an alliance with the Tartars, it was absolutely necessary to obtain the king of Poland's permission to cross his realm. In his discourse presented before the Venetian Senate, at the beginning of January 1477, Callimachus stated that an alliance with the Tartars was not opportune, because they were not to be trusted and also because they did not have as strong of a military force as the Venetians thought. He also brought to the attention of the Senate the necessity of the crusade and the danger of Ottoman expeditions, an allusion to the Ottoman campaign in Moldavia.²¹³

209 Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 58–59.

210 Fraknói, *Mátyás Király Levelei*, I, 359.

211 Biskup and Górski, *Kazimierz Jagiellończyk*, 250.

212 Krzysztof Baczkowski, "Callimaco e le ambascerie veneziane in Polonia negli anni '70 del XV secolo", *Prace Historyczne*, 110 (1994): 43–52.

213 August Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónow z archiwów weneckich. Cześć III", *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk Poznańskiego*, XIX, (1892): 13–15; "Intellexit regia Maiestas convenisse superiori anno hic oratores potentiarum christianorum pro

In a second discourse, on 7 January 1476, Callimachus spoke about the necessity of peace between Hungary and Poland, insisting upon the positive attitude manifested by the Polish kingdom to the king of Hungary in the previous year. The king of Poland was favourable to the crusade but, if the truce from 1474 was not extended, he was willing to ally with the Holy Roman Emperor and the king of Bohemia against the king of Hungary, an option which the Polish nobles would have accepted with great interest. Callimachus argued that an even more dangerous situation could have appeared, as the sultan had proposed to the king of Poland an alliance against the Hungarian king. The sultan allegedly had promised the throne to one of his sons and, should the pope and the Christian princes give money only to the king of Hungary, on the plea of the Christian cause, the Polish king would accept the sultan's offer. To that effect, the emissary showed a letter of the sultan addressed to the Polish king, in which the diplomatic contacts between them were mentioned. Moreover, he also showed a letter of the prince of Moldavia, in which he admitted being a vassal of the Polish king and promised an alliance against the Ottomans and the king of Hungary. The emissary mentioned that Casimir's real reason for sending the emissary to the sultan was to free Moldavia, implying that the sultan's retreat from Moldavia was owed to Polish intervention.²¹⁴

consultanda materia christiana, unde regia Sublimitas cupit quantum fas sit intelligere factas deliberationes et decretas provisiones, circa vires modum tempus et cetera deliberata et facta necessaria pro exterminio quantum Deus permiserit causas inimici ut regia sua Sublimitas consultius statui rebusque suis valeat prospicere. Non enim dubitat regia Sublimitas turchum, qui anno superiori Danubium omnibus viribus traiecit, rem antehac insolitam inauditam penitus in viscera christianorum esse penetraturum, ut quod semel superato et transmissio Danubio existimato insuperabili et clipeo christianorum inexpugnabili, non est cessaturus ab invasione et oppresione regnorum suorum, univere Germanie et reliquorum christianorum principum" (ibid., 15).

214 "Unde intendando el papa quanto etiam per altra via se possi nocer alo inimico et similiter i altri principi christiani se potra tuor de le imprexe, che molto sublevera le cosse comune. Ma non se prorogando necessario sera el re de Polonia condescender ale voglie et tentamenti del Imperador et del fiolo re di Boemia et venir a fractura e guerra cum el re Mathia. Et tanto piu questo sara facile et necessario quanto i baroni di Polonia per le inzurie ricevute, et per el viver presente soto suspecti et male volunta li sono inclinati voluntaroxi. Et potra anche seguir questo altro maior et piu pericoloxo mal chel re de Polonia, el qual per el Turcho e invitato et solicitato a far contra el re Mathia, el favorir dicto re de Polonia alo acquisto del reame de Ongaria per el fiolo del dicto re; Vedendo el papa e le potentie christiane soto nome de imprexa christiana favorir Mathia de danari, pigliava dicto partito et conditione cum el Turco: Et per confirmar questo mostro una copia di una litera che par chel Turco scrivi al re de Polonia che fa mentione de ambascadori mandati dal dicto re al Turcho et chel Turcho mandara a lui. Mostro anche un altra

Consequently, from a Polish perspective, it was not the advance of the Hungarian army which determined the sultan's retreat from Moldavia, but the king of Poland's diplomatic initiatives, the idea being similar with the one from Dlugosz's chronicle.²¹⁵ This opinion contradicted the version of the king of Hungary, while the mentioning of Stephen the Great's letter questioned the Moldavian-Hungarian collaboration against the Ottomans. It is most likely that the letter shown by Callimachus was in fact the Moldavian prince's act of allegiance from 1468, which contained the clause of alliance against the Ottomans, Tartars and the king of Hungary.²¹⁶ Although the treaty was out of date, such a detail was not known in Venice and could have caused confusion.

A New Crusade Plan: Reconquest of Caffa

As a promoter of the crusade project in the East, Venice was forced to reassess the situation after the king of Poland's embassy. On 10 January 1477, the Republic sent new instructions to its ambassadors. The ambassador Emanuele Gerardo was instructed to congratulate the prince of Moldavia for the victory against the Turks in Wallachia and to ensure him of Venice's complete support. Venice's ambassador to Rome obtained the proclamation of the crusade and of the Jubilee in Moldavia, while the pontifical bulls were already issued. Furthermore, the emissary was to clarify for Venice the prince's relations with the Tartars who were getting close to the Moldavian frontier.²¹⁷ The Venetian ambassador in Poland, Giovanni Battista Trevisano, was instructed to continue the negotiations concerning the Tartars and to dispatch exact information about those Tartars who were expected by the prince of Moldavia. Trevisano also had to plead for the cause in front of the Polish king, without provoking in any way his discontent.²¹⁸ The Venetian ambassador in Hungary received the task of congratulating the king for the victory in Wallachia, to insist upon the

letera de Stephano Vayvoda per la qual Stephano confessa et promette esser sua homo et vassalo. Inferando che dicto Stephano sia per esser cum lui in ogni imprexa si contra el Turcho come contra el re de Hungaria. La cauxa veramente di suo ambassadori mandati al Turcho disse esser per liberar Stephano; et de tal liberatione molto se ne da laude: pur manifestamente se vede et comprende non haria manchato practica dal re al Turcho" (Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónow III": 20).

215 "Quo nuncio Turcus conterritus, cum et Poloniae Regem sibi sentiret in dies imminere, Valachia relicta Constantinopolim rediit" (Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 548).

216 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 302.

217 Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră III*, 56–59.

218 Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónow III": 28–29.

conclusion of peace with the king of Poland and the Holy Roman Emperor, and to inquire how the money sent to Buda had been spent.²¹⁹

The information delivered to the Venetian emissary in Moldavia was correct. On 13 January 1477, Pope Sixtus IV published the bull *Redemptor noster*, in which he granted plenary indulgence to all who would visit the two churches from Akkerman during Whit Sunday and in the next two days, and especially to those who would fight along Prince Stephen, a true athlete of the Christian faith, against the Ottomans. The bull underlined the recognition of Moldavia as a gate of Christendom by asserting that should the Turks conquer it, they would have open access to the Kingdom of Hungary and other Christian realms.²²⁰ Although Venice deployed all diplomatic means to obtain this crusade bull, the new context created by the dissensions between Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, and the Holy Roman Empire called for new action. The anti-Ottoman coalition created by the king of Hungary at the end of 1476 was in jeopardy. In January 1477, Vlad the Impaler was murdered, and Wallachia fell again under Ottoman suzerainty.²²¹ Given these circumstances, Venice wanted to make sure that the prince of Moldavia would continue to fight against the Turks, reopening negotiations with the Holy See and the king of Hungary. On 17 March 1477, new instructions were sent to the Venetian ambassador at Rome. Jacobo de Medio was told to demand 10,000 ducats for the prince of Moldavia, who was in a very difficult situation. Moreover, the money should be sent with no delay, otherwise the circumstances could compel Stephen to conclude peace with the Ottoman Empire. Venice was even willing to bear the

219 Ibid. 29–31.

220 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/2, 241–243; “... Stephanum Wayvode ducem Moldavie eiusque dominia, que in finitimis ipsorum Turchorum oris sita sunt, ut tandem ipsis sue spurcissime tirannidi subiectis facilius sibi pateat ad cetera christianorum loca progressus, moliri non desinat, et quamvis prefatus Stephanus tanquam verus christiane fidei athleta proni sit animi ad resistendum ipsorum Turchorum et perfidie et incursionibus, tamen ad tante rei perferendam sarcinam debitoque effectui mandandam proprie ad hoc non suppetent facultates, sed sunt ad ea christicolarum opes et subsidia non mediocriter necessaria, aut qui de bonis a deo sibi collatis contribuant, aut personaliter pugnaturi ad exercitum per ipsum Stephanum instaurandum proficiscantur, ut tandem ipsorum Turchorum canina rabies reprimi et de christifidelium finibus eiici possit, adimaturque ipsis tam nepharie temeritatis in alios christicolos seviendi audacia: unde nos, cui universalis christianorum cura est credita, animo revolventes, quod si ipsius Stephani dominia ab eisdem Turchis opprimi contingeret, facilis sibi nedum ad Ungarie, verum etiam ad quam plurima alia christianorum regna et dominia pateret descensus” (ibid., 241).

221 Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș (Dracula)*, (Bucharest, 1976), 173–175.

expenses, on the understanding that the pope would issue a crusade bull.²²² On the following day, new instructions were given to the Venetian ambassadors in Hungary and Poland as well. In the case of the orders sent to Giovanni Battista Trevisano we can notice a diminishing interest by the Venetians for the project of the alliance with the Tartars and a greater preoccupation for smoothing away disagreements between the Roman-German emperor, the king of Poland and the king of Hungary by any means, including through the pope's mediation. The same preoccupation can be noticed in the instructions sent for Antonio Victuri, the Venetian ambassador in Buda. In addition, he was told to convince King Matthias to preserve the alliance with the Moldavian lord and, at the same time, to reassure the Moldavian envoys in Buda of the Venetian support for Moldavia's fight against the infidels, all these being meant to influence Stephen the Great to refuse any negotiations with the sultan.²²³ Finally, on 10 April 1477, the Venetian Senate was asking their ambassador in Rome to inform the pope about the Ottoman military preparations and to insist that he send a papal legate in Moldavia.²²⁴

In May 1477, a messenger of the prince of Moldavia arrived in Venice. On this occasion, the events during the campaign from the previous year were discussed together with more projects related with the pursuit of war against the Ottomans. In the message delivered to Venice, the prince of Moldavia blamed the kings of Hungary and Poland for their actions in the previous year. Stephen felt that the "commitments and oaths" were not respected, and for this reason his realm had a lot to suffer. The prince was clearly referring to the failure to surround the sultan's army during battle. Stephen argued that he had the opportunity to conclude a peace with the Ottomans, but he dismissed it, refusing to believe that the other Christian princes would abandon him. Stephen the Great also voiced his determination to continue the fight against the Ottomans and for end he was relying exclusively on the support of Venice, because the neighbouring kings were not to be trusted and were more concerned with the disputes between them. Finally, Stephen had information that, in the coming summer, the Ottomans were to attack Kilia and Akkerman, fortresses which the prince considered vital for the security of Moldavia and for the realms of Poland and Hungary. Moreover, if he could preserve these it would make it easier to reconquer Caffa and Kerson from the infidels.²²⁵

222 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 19–20.

223 Cieszkowski, "Materiały do historii Jagiellónów III": 47–52.

224 Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră III*, 66–67.

225 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 343–347.

Stephen the Great had a plan to regain Caffa, which was to enter under his protection.²²⁶ Furthermore, the prince of Moldavia had stopped the retreat of some Genoese dissipated forces, such as the senior of Matrega, Zaccaria Ghizolfi, and his men, who were to remain to support a Christian expedition, should it be organised.²²⁷ The Moldavian prince's intentions to reclaim Crimea from Ottoman control resonated with Genoese plans to recover its former colony. The Genoese authorities led an intense diplomatic action to build an anti-Ottoman coalition, aiming mainly for the support of Poland and Mengli Ghirai's Tartars.²²⁸ The Genoese plan also relied on the senior of Matrega, who survived north of the Black Sea.

The king of Poland was much more concerned to solve the conflict with Hungary and had little interest in these projects. After the failure of the "Scythian project," caused by the king's refusal to allow the Tartars to cross his realm,²²⁹ Casimir IV had no interest whatsoever to break good relations with the sultan. Because of his attitude, on 24 May 1477, the papal legate Balthasar de Piscia placed the king under ecclesiastic censure: Casimir IV was considered a supporter of heresy and an enemy of the fight against the infidels, which was led by the "fearless warrior" Matthias.²³⁰ The sanction imposed by the papal legate demonstrated that the pope sided with the king of Hungary. Moreover, the pope was advising the bishop of Warmia and the grand master of the Teutonic Order to receive Matthias Corvinus' protection, thereby causing further problems for the king of Poland.

In this new context, Callimachus was again sent to Italy. In June 1477, he asked Venice to mediate reconciliation between the Holy-Roman Emperor and the kings of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary, in order to create a strong coalition against the Ottomans.²³¹ The Venetians could not get involved in these

226 Székely and Gorovei, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina*, 48–53.

227 Ștefan Andreescu, "Ștefan cel Mare al Moldovei și Zaccaria Ghizolfi, seniorul din Matrega: Câteva note despre relațiile lor", *Analele Putnei*, 1 (2005), 1: 118.

228 Danuta Quirini-Popławska, "Próby nawiązania antytureckiego porozumienia genueńsko-polsko-tatarskiego w latach 1480–1481", *Historia vero testis temporum. Księga jubileuszowa poświęcona profesorowi Krzysztofowi Baczkowskiemu w 70 rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Janusz Smolucha, Anna Wasko, Tomasz Graff, Paweł F. Nowakowski, (Kraków, 2008), 179–199.

229 Pienaru, "Proiectul scitic": 133–134.

230 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 271–274.

231 "Suasit denique ut nos si pax aut concordia aliqua inter Imperatoriam Maiestatem et reges Polonie atque Boemie cum rege Hungarie secutura est velimus ut potius eat fiat interveniente aliqua nostra opera et intercessione, quam sine ea, et quod nobis conciliare queramus amiciciam et intelligentiam aliquam cum predicto Imperatore et duobus regibus, cum quibus coniuncti tamquam perpetuo usque in Poloniam muro, erimus ab

disputes without arousing suspicions. Even the attention granted to Moldavia displeased the king of Hungary. In June 1477, the Venetian emissary to Buda was instructed to reject the rumors which had reached the Hungarian court, according to which Venice supported prince of Moldavia's request to receive the financial support of the papal curia directly.²³² Venice claimed that the negotiations with the Holy See in favor of the Moldavian prince did not harm the relations established between Hungary and Moldavia, because the prince remained the king's vassal and did not conclude a separate peace with the Ottomans.²³³ The existence of direct connection between Moldavia and the Holy See, mediated by Venice, in a such an important matter like that of the papal financial support, diminished a lot the importance of the Hungarian king, especially given the fact that the king of Poland was claiming the suzerainty over Moldavia. For this reason, Matthias Corvinus wanted to keep under control Stephen the Great's diplomatic connections with the Holy See and with Venice and eventually he succeeded.

The long-awaited attack against Kilia and Akkerman failed to take place just as, the plan to reconquer Caffa was abandoned. In November 1477, Stephen the Great attacked Wallachia again, defeating an Ottoman army and installing a new prince,²³⁴ Basarab the Young, but shortly afterward Basarab also bowed to the sultan.²³⁵ Given the fact that Hungary got involved in the war against the Habsburgs, maintaining Wallachia within the Christian coalition became more difficult and it was no coincidence that the new prince of Wallachia claimed that the new established peace with the sultan was by no means an act of betrayal, but on the contrary, a favourable decision for all of Christendom.²³⁶

omni interno tutiores et contra Turchum robustiores; quoniam compositis rebus cum rege Hungarie facile omnes converterentur contra comunem inimicum" (Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónow III", 52–53).

232 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 32.

233 "Del Vulacho non volemo altro giudice che la Maiestà Regia, la qual sà che sempre nuj stricta et efficacemente li raccomandassemo dicto Vulacho come valente jnimicho del Turcho et come quello che era in grande pericolo, andandolj el turcho adosso cussi potente come lui andò. Et, se lo ricommandasemo al Pontefice, non fu già cossa non devuta et non ben honesta, et anche existimata per nuy utile et necessaria al reame de Hungaria, essendo quello vassalo et membro de dicto reame. Et, se li mandassemo nostro messo, non fò per altro fine, nè cum altro studio, se non per tenerlo in fede et devotione de la Regia Maiestà et in favor de le cosse christiane, dubitandosse o de la soa oppressione et extinctione, o de partito suo cum el Turcho" (Iorga, *Veneția în Marea Neagră III*, 74).

234 Dlugossi, *Historia Polonicae*, II, 562.

235 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 187.

236 Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, VII, 219 and 234.

The Ottoman offensive, in 1477, focused on the main adversary: Venice. Suleyman pasha sieged Lepanto, while Iskender pasha, the governor of Bosnia, entered in northern Italy that autumn, threatening the city of St. Mark.²³⁷ The military actions were doubled by diplomatic initiatives, aimed to use the dissensions between the Christian princes. In early 1478, an emissary of the sultan and one of the khan of Crimea presented King Casimir with an alliance treaty against Hungary, but despite Callimachus' arguments, the king of Poland refused to make a clear decision in this matter. In this complicated context, on 15 January 1478, the papal legate, Balthasar of Piscia, excommunicated King Casimir and his son, the king of Bohemia.²³⁸ Callimachus considered that the Turks could be used in Poland's interest to counteract the alliance between Moldavia and Hungary,²³⁹ launching the idea of a "preventive" war to reestablish Polish suzerainty over Moldavia.²⁴⁰ However, such views were shared only by few Polish noblemen. In the end, a diplomatic solution prevailed. At the end of 1478, Dobieslaw Bieszkowski, castellan of Belz, was sent to Moldavia to obtain the prince's promise that he would pay homage to the Polish king. On 22 January 1479, Stephen the Great issued the act in which he pledged to pay corporal homage to Casimir IV at Kolomya, on condition that he received a six-month notice about the date of the ceremony.²⁴¹

The prospect of a peace with the Ottoman Empire was very attractive for all the Christian powers engaged in war with the Porte. On 3 July 1478, Matthias Corvinus demanded safe conduct for Peter Docz, the emissary who was sent to negotiate a peace treaty.²⁴² In turn, Venice led separate peace discussions with the sultan, putting an end to a long period of war in December 1478. An Ottoman offensive in Albania, marked by the conquest of the city of Kroja, new Ottoman expeditions in Friuli and Northern Italy, and a plague epidemic forced the Republic to accept very harsh conditions. Another important reason which influenced Venice to ask for peace was the death of Uzun Hasan, in January 1478.²⁴³ Once the Republic of St. Mark accepted the peace, the sultan was free to focus on other targets.

237 Inalcik, "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades", 329–330.

238 Stachon, *Polityka Polski*, 184–186.

239 *Acta Tomiciana*, 1, (Poznań, 1852), *appendix*, 12–13.

240 Şerban Papacostea, "La guerre ajournée: les relations polono-moldaves en 1478. Reflexions en marge d' un text de Filippo Buonaccorsi-Callimachus", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XI (1972), 1: 5.

241 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare*, II, 351–353.

242 Fraknói, *Mátyás Király Levelei*, I, 381–382.

243 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 321–328.

In April 1479, the prince of Moldavia asked from the *burgmeister* of Braşov for news about the Ottoman troops which had crossed Danube. He mainly wanted to know if that army was heading toward Moldavia.²⁴⁴ Six days later, the Saxons sent their reply: the Turks were heading toward Transylvania, and the prince of Moldavia was kindly asked to come as soon as possible to help.²⁴⁵ Stephen the Great prepared the defense with great care. In June 1479, he began the reconstruction of the fortress of Kilia and, within 24 days the defensive wall erected under the prince's supervision was finalised.²⁴⁶ This was prompted by the information about the Ottoman fleet movements in the Black Sea. A Venetian report from 8 September 1479 mentioned that a fleet of 60 galleys had conquered a fortress that was not previously occupied by the Ottomans.²⁴⁷ It was probably one of the small Genoese fortresses which had survived the Ottoman expedition from 1475. Historians suggested its identification with Matrega, because in 1479 Zaccaria Ghizolfi planned to cross Moldavia²⁴⁸ on his way to Genoa, but Stephen had confiscated his assets, and forced him to return to Taman peninsula.²⁴⁹ In this context, Stephen the Great did not pay the homage of allegiance to the king of Poland, although Casimir IV went to Kolomya in the summer of 1477 for this purpose.²⁵⁰ The prince's attitude was based on the stipulations of the Hungarian-Polish peace, signed at Olomouc (Olmütz)

244 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare*, II, 353.

245 "Ideo cum magno desiderio et affectione rogamus vestram magnificentiam ut festinare et propinquare dignetur ad has partes ad protegendas ipsas a praedictis saevissimus Turcis. Insuper intimaverunt nobis praedicti fideles sacrae coronae, quomodo ipsi cum confratribus ipsorum violenter et per potentiam Turcorum coacti sint ad obediendum ipsis Turcis et tanquam quasi a fide alienati ac si essent Turci. Unde et praefati fideles expectant cum suspitionibus maximis vestram magnificentiam. Sperant enim in magnificentiam vestram ut ipsos de potestate atque servitute praedictorum infidelium liberabit ut sacrae coronae et christianae fidei servire possint (Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, VII, 210).

246 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 190.

247 Makuscev, *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium*, II, 186.

248 Iorga, *Chilia şi Cetăţii Albe*, 153.

249 "Zà grande tempo dè averse inteso le Magnificencie Vostre de la perdita de lo mio castelo de la Matrega e como eo scampato tutti li mei populi e retirati, chi in Campagna, in insula nostra Matrice; e, vegando li Turchi modo sercare de perseguime, deliberai de vegnire ale magnificencie Vostre per via de Velachia e, como foi instrato in quello locho, sono stato derobato da lo signore Stefano Vaivoda, yta e taliter che, vegandome cossi nudo, no avi deliberacione de sequire lo mio viaggio, e sono retornato, chi zà agn fà, apud li mei populi, e vivo e fim achi in seme con loro (Iorga, *Acte şi fragmente*, III, 63).

250 *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, v, (Lwow, 1888), 226.

in April 1479, which did not include any clause regarding Moldavia. Therefore, Stephen preserved his previous status.²⁵¹

In October 1479, the Ottoman army, estimated at 40,000 men, attacked Transylvania, but was defeated in battle near Orăștie by the Hungarian army led by Stephen Bathory and Paul Kinizsi in one of the greatest victories ever won by the Hungarians against the Ottomans. Details about the triumph were included in a letter to the pope from 22 October 1479, where Matthias Corvinus named it a great victory for all of Christendom.²⁵² Despite the victory, the Ottoman threat remained a major concern.

The Crusade of Otranto and its Eastern Implications

On 22 January 1480, Stephen the Great wrote to the Saxon officials in Brașov, informing them once again that the Ottomans gathered a large army but he did not know the aim of the expedition. The Moldavian lord also sent a message to Stephen Bathory about the movements of the Ottomans. Everyone was ready for a new confrontation.²⁵³ According to a document from 30 May 1480, the prince of Moldavia informed the king of Poland that the Turks were apparently going to strike in Podolia, more precisely the fortress of Kamenets-Podolsky.²⁵⁴ Indeed, an expedition led by Ali beg and Iskender pasha took place but its target proved to be Moldavia, at the instigation of the prince of Wallachia.²⁵⁵ This attack was a diversion, because the main blows were directed against the Hospitallers in Rhodes and southern Italy.

In May 1480, the Ottoman fleet began the first siege of Rhodes, which lasted several months.²⁵⁶ In August 1480, the Ottoman troops led by Ahmed Gedik pasha disembarked in southern Italy, conquering Otranto. For the first time, the Ottomans were striking straight into the heart of Christendom.²⁵⁷ The

251 Papacostea, "La guerre ajournée", 20–21.

252 Iván and Albert, *Acta extera*, IV, 394–395; "Hec significare volui Sanctitati Vestre, ut cognoscat, qualem mihi victoriam Dei misericordia sub felici Sanctitatis Vestre auspicio pro totius christiane reipublice felicitate concessit et simul ut pro tanto christianitatis bono, proque caritate paterna, quam erga me gerit, de tam felicibus successibus meis congaudeat, ardentiusque rebus christianis provideat, ut ceptam hanc felici fato Sanctitatis Vestre super hostes fidei victoriam crebriores victoriae subsequantur (ibid., 395).

253 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 355–356.

254 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 316.

255 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 200–201.

256 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 346–363.

257 Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274–1580. From Lyons to Alcazar*, (Oxford, 1992), 111.

Ottomans' presence in the Italian Peninsula and the massacre of the city inhabitants had a strong emotional impact, especially in Rome, where the pope took into consideration the possibility to seek refuge in France. Once more, the Holy Father called the Italian states to put an end to their disputes and to take arms against the infidels.²⁵⁸ Under these new conditions, the pope asked for immediate reconciliation between the king of Hungary and the Holy Roman Emperor, and subsequently reduced the financial support for the kingdom of Hungary to 50,000 ducats.²⁵⁹ On 14 December 1480, Matthias Corvinus wrote to the pope about the war he had waged that year and the victories obtained against the Ottomans in the Smederevo region.²⁶⁰ Several months later, on 14 April 1481, he informed the pope that until the Feast of St. John the Baptist the sultan would come in person against Hungary and Moldavia, according to the information gathered by his spies from the Ottoman Empire and by the prince of Moldavia, whose letter was attached in testimony.²⁶¹

Indeed, a letter of Stephen the Great, written in February 1481, mentions to the city fathers of Braşov that he had men in the Ottoman Empire, who were prepared to send any information about the Ottomans' moves.²⁶² They were Moldavian spies, or, to be more accurate, Moldavian emissaries, sent to conclude peace with the sultan. A copy of an undated *ahidname* of Mehmed II was preserved, in which the sultan confirmed the conclusion of peace with the prince of Moldavia, who was to pay a tribute of 6,000 florins and to become "friend of the [sultan's] friends and enemy of the [sultan's] enemies."²⁶³ From

258 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, IV, 333–340.

259 Edgár Artner (ed.), *Hungary as propugnaculum of Western Christianity. Documents for the Vatican Secrets Archives (ca 1214–1606)*, (Budapest-Rome, 2004), 124–126.

260 Fraknói, *Mátyás Király Levelei*, II, 76–80.

261 "Ita quippe sum avisatus per nonnullos fideles amicos de porta turcorum principis, quod etiam plures capitanei mei et exploratores ex Turcia, reversi confirmant, statuuisse illum in vindictam accepte nuper a me iniurie omnes suos conatus, dimissis ceteris potentatibus christianis, quos bello premebat, in me et dominia mea convertere, ac usque festum sancti Iohannis Baptiste personaliter cum omni potentia sua dominia mea subintrare; quas novitates littere Stephani waywode Moldaui inter alias plurimas in eandem fere sententiam allate confirmant, prout ex eidem litteris, in specie presentibus inclusis, et ad vestram sanctitatem unacum quadam scedula Stephani de Bathor waywode mei Transsiluani transmisit, beatitudo vestra cognoscat. Intellet enim, quales nunc apparatus ipse Turcus faciat, ut simul et mea dominia, et ipsius Stephani waywode invadat, ut scilicet nos undique constrictos atque ad ferendam mutuo opem magis impeditos facilius opprimat (Fraknói, *Mátyás Király Levelei*, II, 123–124).

262 Gündisch, *Urkundenbuch*, VII, 256.

263 Mehmet, *Documente turceşti*, I, 6.

another source we learn that the peace was concluded in Mehmed II's last year of reign, in the year 885 of Hegira that is between 13 March 1480 and 1 March 1481, most likely in the last months of Mehmed II's reign.²⁶⁴ The conclusion of peace with the Ottoman Empire is also confirmed by the message sent to the king of Poland. The prince of Moldavia informed Casimir IV that the Turks were asking permission to cross Moldavia on their way to Poland and informed him about the amount of money paid to the sultan for the Genoese prisoners from Caffa who had found refuge in Moldavia, which he wanted repaid.²⁶⁵

The conclusion of peace between Mehmed II and Stephen the Great must be put in relation to a future Ottoman campaign which the sultan intended to lead personally. Although he continued to claim the role of the defender of the "gate of Christendom," the prince of Moldavia surrendered to the sultan with very favourable conditions, but the peace was fragile. In April 1481, the sultan left Constantinople for an expedition whose destination remained unknown, although the king of Hungary was sure that it was heading against him. This would explain the advantageous conditions offered by the sultan to the prince of Moldavia. A few days later, the sultan complained of severe abdominal pain, which aroused the suspicion that he might have been poisoned. On 3 May 1481, Mehmed II died at the age of 49.²⁶⁶ With the sultan's death, the peace treaty lost its validity and shortly thereafter Stephen made known his renewed willingness for the crusade. On 8 April 1481, Sixtus IV issued a circular letter calling all European princes to fight against the Turks. Indulgences were proclaimed and the tithe for crusade was gathered in the all of Italy.²⁶⁷ Stephen the Great's intervention in Wallachia, early in the summer of 1481, coincided with the beginning of the naval operations for expelling the Ottomans from Otranto (4 July 1481), supervised directly by Sixtus IV. Stephen's attack could be considered a military action initiated at Christendom's eastern frontier, closely connected with the crusade of Otranto.²⁶⁸ On 8 July 1481, in the battle of Râmnic, the Wallachian prince, Basarab the Young, suffered a bitter defeat, credited by the Moldavian chronicle to a miraculous intervention of Saint Procopius.²⁶⁹

264 Mustafa A. Mehmet, "Un document turc concernant le kharatch de la Moldavie et de la Valachie aux XV^e–XVI^e siècles", *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, v (1967), 1–2: 273–274 and 267–268.

265 Ștefan S. Gorovei, "La paix moldo-ottomane de 1486", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXI (1982), 3–4: 414.

266 Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror*, 403–404.

267 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, IV, 340–343.

268 Ștefan Andreescu, "Autour de la dernière phase des rapports entre la Moldavie et Gênes", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXI (1982), 2: 279.

269 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 19.

A more detailed view can be found in King Matthias Corvinus' letter to the pope from 7 August 1481. According to this document the lord of Moldavia, liege of the king of Hungary, advanced deep inside Wallachia and defeated Basarab the Young who had a large army composed of Wallachians and Ottomans. The victory was complete and some of the military insignia of those defeated were to be sent to the pope. At the same time, the king expressed his regret that, because the papal legate had blocked the funds, the opportunity of moving farther into the heart of the Ottoman Empire, up to Constantinople, was wasted.²⁷⁰ Indeed, the expedition from Wallachia was followed by raids to the south of Danube and, in the autumn of 1481, the Hungarian army advanced in Serbia up to Krushevats,²⁷¹ but Constantinople was still very remote. Such an overestimation of the military capability of the Hungarians is explained by the recent death of the sultan and the fight for power between his sons.

The death of Mehmed II relaxed the Christian camp, and the Christian rulers turned their attention to the problems of their home states. The pope adopted a similar attitude. Even though Sixtus IV continued to preach for a crusade against the Ottomans until his death on 12 August 1484, in the last years of his pontificate he was more preoccupied with the Italian policy of the Holy See. The fight for power between the sultan's sons also stimulated effort and interest in certain audacious projects, one of them being the recovery of the Genoese possessions of Pera and around the northern Black Sea.²⁷² A report of the Genoese ambassadors Bartolomeo of Campofregoso and Lodiscio of Fieschi from 30 September 1481 suggested optimistically the possibility of reconquering Caffa. Although the Tartars and the king of Poland were at war against each other, there were some rumors that Mengli Girey and Eminek, together with the Armenians and Greeks from Caffa, were ready to stand against the Ottomans. The prince of Moldavia was also mentioned among the potential enemies of the Porte. He was said to dispose of a large army and to have the support of the king of Poland and of the Christians, an aspect which was

270 Fraknói, *Mátyás Király Levelei*, II, 157–159; “Si enim ego illos decem milia equites, quemadmodum mihi certa et indubitata spes erat, nisi dominus Theanensis perturbasset, habere ab electoribus at principibus imperii potuissem, ego hac opportunitate, que a Deo rebus christianis collata est, collectis omnibus viribus meis et illis decem milibus adiunctis tale facinus edere poteram, quale temporibus meis pro defensione christiana editum a nemine est, et optimam gessissem in Deo fiduciam, quod collectis viribus meis et illis decem milibus potuissem usque in viscera Turcie et loca Bizancio finitima penetrare” (ibid., 158).

271 Inalcik, “The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades”, 335.

272 G. Grasso, “Documenti riguardanti la costituzione di una lega contro il Turco nel 1481”, *Giornale Ligustico di Archeologia, Storia de Belle Arte*, VI (1879): 321–494.

meant to increase the envoys' optimism.²⁷³ The mentioning of Stephen the Great in this context underlines the prince's important position in the crusading projects on the Eastern border of Christendom. Interestingly enough, in October 1481, Bayezid ordered a decrease of the Moldavian tribute from 6,000 to 5,000 florins,²⁷⁴ which means that the new sultan had made a peace offer which was more advantageous than the previous one, but which, as we learn from the subsequent events, was refused by the Moldavian lord. As for the plan to reconquer Caffa, the intentions of Stephen the Great had little in common with the Genoese projects. In 1482, while the Genoese emissaries were still hoping to convince the Tartar khan to cast away Ottoman dominion and to favor the return of Genoa to Crimea, Stephen the Great invited Zaccaria Ghisolfi, who was a guest hosted at the khan's court to come to Moldavia, offering him a castle in his realm.²⁷⁵ Ghisolfi refused the offer of the prince, opting for Ivan III's protection, but was not able to reach Muscovy.²⁷⁶ With these last attempts ends the history of the Genoese presence in the Black Sea. The only cities which remained under Christian control were Kilia and Akkerman. They represented two strategic positions which Stephen the Great managed to defend after ten years of war against the Ottoman Empire. For the prince of Moldavia, involvement in crusading efforts meant his rise in European politics and a better status in relation to the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary, but the confrontation with the Ottomans was far from being over.

273 "Quod faciendi, civitas Caphe commorantes in Capha, videlicet Greci et Armeni, sunt dispoxitissimi. Quare, amore Dei tam quam burgensium Caphe, in Dei nomine disponete transire strictum, quod non consistit nisi in deliberare semel. Stephanus Vaivoda facit maximum exercitum: etiam habet auxilium a Rege Polonie et a Christianis, de quo possumus sperare de aliquo bono fructo. Et sic Christo placeat" (Grasso, "Documenti": 484).

274 Mehmet, "Un document turc concernant le kharatch de la Moldavie": 268.

275 Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 63.

276 Ștefan Andreescu, *Izvoare noi cu privire la istoria Mării Negre*, (Bucharest, 2005), 96–97.

The Eastern Border of Christendom and the Ottoman Conquest of Black Sea

The 1484 campaign represented a great moment for asserting the *ghaza* ideology and for constructing the Ottoman political identity. In May 1484, the sultan issued an edict for all *kadis* of the empire, which highlighted the similarities between *akin* and *ghaza*. “All those wishing to join in the sacred conquest, engage in the pleasure of *ghaza* and *cihad*, [all those] desiring booty and plunder, [all those] brave comrades who gain their bread by the sword and all those wishing to receive a *timar* by comradeship, are requested to join me with their weapons and accessories in this blessed *ghaza* and for a share in the rewards of this *ghaza* and *cihad*.”¹ The Ottoman chronicles paid great attention to the “holy wars” in Moldavia and descriptions combine *ghaza* with the plunder expeditions; the conqueror sultan was depicted as a peacemaker and founder of the Islamic law. A close connection was proven between the victories of Kilia and Akkerman, the emergence of Ottoman historiography after the 1484 campaign and the adoption of a new direction in the ideology of the Ottoman State.² Bayezid II seized the throne because he was supported by the centralist circles represented by the palace slaves, while his brother and rival Djem (the successor at throne desired by Mehmed II) had been supported by the *ghazi* circles. To win the over, Bayezid II acknowledged the rights of frontier beys upon the properties lost during the reign of Mehmed II. At the same time, following the janissaries’ revolt in the spring of 1484, the sultan needed a campaign to mitigate the aggressive faction of slaves and to state his role of organiser and leader of the *ghaza*.³ Because he wanted to avoid beginning a war with a powerful State, the sultan had three possibilities: Albania, Dalmatia and the Lower Danube provinces.⁴ In other words, he had to choose between a war with Venice and a war with Moldavia. Bayezid II chose the most accessible

1 Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, 48.

2 Halil Inalcik, “The Rise of Ottoman Historiography”, *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis and Peter M. Holt, (Oxford University Press, 1962), 152–167.

3 Gemil, *Romanians and Ottomans*, 209–210.

4 Sydney Nettleton Fisher, *The Foreign Relations of Turkey 1481–1512*, (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1948), 32.

option, but one must not omit the strategic dimensions of Kilia and Akkerman in the political rhetoric of the time.

The Ottoman Campaign of 1484 and Venetian Intelligence

The defeat in the war with the Ottoman Empire (1463–1479) compelled Venice to adopt a very cautious attitude toward the Porte in the following years. The outcome of the conflict was negative on all levels. Although it had spent a large amount of money to defend its positions, the Republic had eventually lost important strategic positions in the Aegean Sea and Albania and was forced to accept a humiliating peace treaty. Moreover, the setbacks suffered during the war shattered Venetian confidence in its maritime superiority in the Mediterranean Sea.⁵ If at the beginning of the confrontation the Ottomans were considered to be poorly prepared for the war at sea,⁶ the development of the conflict dramatically changed this optimistic perspective. Not only did the Venetian fleet fail to tip the balance of war, but it was reluctant to face the sultan's ships in 1470, when Mehmed II attacked and conquered Negroponte Island.⁷

All these reasons explain why for two decades the Serene Republic avoided any anti-Ottoman military actions, and this prudent attitude persisted even after the ascension to the pontifical throne of Innocent VIII. Good indicators of the manner in which Venice acted in its relations with the Porte are the reports written by the Venetian *bailo* in Constantinople, Pietro Bembo, and the secretary of the Venetian Senate, Giovanni Dario in 1484. This year coincided with the beginning of the papacy of Innocent VIII on the pontifical throne, but

5 Luciano Pezzolo, "Stato, guerra e finanza nella Repubblica di Venezia fra medioevo e prima età moderna", *Mediterraneo in armi (sec. XV–XVIII)*, ed. Rossella Cancila, (Palermo: Associazione Mediterranea, 2007), 71. The author underlines that although the loss of Negroponte was balanced by the acquisition of Cyprus the war with the Porte (1463–1479) shattered the Venetian conviction on its maritime superiority.

6 The words are to be found in a report from Chios elaborated in 1455: *rudes enim marinarum rerum ac parum docti*. See Amedeo Vigna, *Codice diplomatico delle colonie tauro-liguri durante la Signoria di San Giorgio (1453–1475)*. Tomo primo", *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria*, VI (1868): 300; similar views are mentioned in an article published by Șerban Papacostea, "Caffa et la Moldavie face à l'expansion ottomane (1453–1484)", *Genovezii la Marea Neagra in sec. XIII–XIV*, (Bucharest, 1977), 131–153.

7 For the conquest of Negroponte see Frederic C. Lane, "Naval Actions and Fleet Organisation 1499–1502", *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J. R. Hale (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973), 147; Luciano Pezzolo, "Stato", 71.

also with the unleashing of the military expedition led by the Sultan Bayezid II against Moldavia.⁸

In preparing their reports, Bembo and Dario aimed to capture a complete picture of the Ottoman Empire's situation at the beginning of a new Sultan's reign and to depict as accurately as possible the state of Venice's relations with their powerful neighbour to the East. The fear that the war that ended in disaster for the *Serenissima* in 1479 might restart caused the Republic's envoys and government to keep a keen eye on all news about the Sultan's military preparations, the strength of his army and navy, and his diplomatic relations with Christian and Muslim powers.⁹ The documents mention Ottoman negotiations with the kingdom of Hungary, with the Knights Hospitaller of Rhodes, with Mamluk Egypt, and with the heirs of Uzun Hasan, the *Ak koyunlu* khan. The kingdom of Poland is missing from the list; only once does Giovanni Dario mention it in passing, in a report from early 1484, stating that if the Sultan were to defeat Stephen the Great of Moldavia, this would open "a very dangerous gate for Poland."¹⁰ This neglect of Poland is significant in itself. Having made peace with the Turks during Mehmed II's reign, the Jagiellonian kingdom was absent from all projects against the Ottomans for a long time and, apart from a brief episode in 1485, it continued this policy until the end of the century.

Moldavia's place in East-European web of political relations in 1484 is separate and well defined. Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario related in detail the course of the conflict between the Sultan and "Carabogdania," "Moldova" or "Valahia", as our documents refer to the Stephen the Great's realm, from the first rumors of war through to Bayezid II's return from the campaign. Without going so far as to keep a diary of the Sultan's expedition, the two Venetians compiled for their government a number of detailed reports on the preparations

8 Dario's reports have been published fully by Giuseppe Calò, *22 Dispacci da Costantinopoli al doge Giovanni Mocenigo*, (Venice, 1992); some fragments were also discussed by Cristian Luca, "Observații asupra unei ediții de documente venețiene conținând informații despre raporturile moldo-otomane din veacul al XV-lea", *Istros*, 10, (2000): 519–524.

9 For the larger framework of Venetian-Ottoman relations after the end of this war see Diana Gilliland Wright, "Bartolomeo Minio: Venetian Administration in 15th Century Nauplion", *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies* 3 (2000), 5: 1–235. See also Ovidiu Cristea, "La pace tesa: i rapporti veneto-ottomani del 1484", *Annuario di Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica di Venezia* 5 (2003): 277–286 for the political context of 1484.

10 Calò, *22 Dispacci*, 48–50: "doman o laltro insirano fuora de la bocha per andar contra carabogdan dove se dixè el Signor cum le soe zente haver drizzato el so camino (...) vero e che per quanto sento rasonar da homeni pratici de quelli paexi lavrira una porta molto pericolosa contro pollana".

for the campaign, the progress of the sieges of Kilia and Akkerman, Stephen the Great's reaction, and the consequences of Bayezid's victories.

The importance of these documents goes beyond the light that they shed on what is already a well-known crux in historiography. The course of the 1484 campaign has already been carefully documented, therefore Bembo's and Dario's dispatches simply confirm or nuance a number of points already established. Yet these texts also allow us to grasp more exactly the Venetian view of the events of 1484 and of Moldavia's role in the front against the Ottomans. Historians have hitherto constructed the Venetian viewpoint from narrative sources, rather than from these reports. The works of Domenico Malipiero,¹¹ Marco Guazzo,¹² Giovanni Maria Angiolo, ¹³ Marino Sanudo the Younger¹⁴ or Andrea Cambini¹⁵ record the course of the campaign, the battles fought and the reasons for the Christian defeat, albeit with great discrepancies in the chronology. These differences are in great part due to the use of different contemporary sources, some of which cannot be identified. The chroniclers' manner of writing, and the greater or lesser distance in time from the events they relate, influenced their accounts of Sultan Bayezid's expedition. Often the authors include within a single paragraph events which were several years apart. Sources of this sort are also problematic because they are principally concerned with much broader subjects (e.g. the history of Venice, the history of the Ottoman Empire) and thus seem to marginalise the Moldavian campaign in the way they report it in a few pages among so much other material.

Unlike the narrative sources mentioned above, the dispatches of Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario were written by observers contemporary to these events. The *bailo* and the secretary of the Senate tried to summarise all the rumors and reports that were circulating in Constantinople and Adrianople. Moreover, they did not confine themselves to the role of passive observers but also expressed their own opinions on the Sultan's intentions, on the aims of the expedition that was being prepared, and on the state of Venetian-Ottoman

11 Domenico Malipiero, *Annali Veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500*, ed. Francesco Longo, ("Archivio Storico Italiano", VII/1, Firenze, 1843–1844).

12 *Historie di Messer Marco Guazzo*, (Venice, 1545).

13 Donado Da Lezze, *Historia Turchesca (1300–1514)*, ed. I. Ursu, (Bucharest, 1909).

14 Marino Sanudo il Giovane, *Le vite dei Dogi (1474–1494)*, ed. Angela Caracciolo Aricò, (Padova, 1989).

15 Andrea Cambini, *Commentario de Andrea Cambini fiorentino della origine de Turchi et Imperio della casa Ottomana*, in *Commentarii delle cose de'Turchi di Paulo Giovio e Andrea Cambini*, (Venice, 1541); cf. Andrea Cambini, "Dell'Origine de Turchi di Andrea Cambini fiorentino", *Dell'Historia universale dell'origine et imperio de Turchi raccolta da M. Francesco Sansovino*, (Venice, 1554), 142 recto–186 verso.

relations. Above and beyond the actual information that they contain, the texts written by these two Venetian authors throw light on how information circulated at the time and also on the ways in which it was manipulated. This also leads us to the main difficulty with such sources and the snares concealed therein. The Turks were masters in circulating false news, but the Venetians were aware of this. Therefore, they always sought to supplement information from Ottoman dignitaries with other intelligence obtained from spies, from merchants in the Levantine trade, or from the rumors circulating in the Imperial capital. Often enough, there were so many versions of an event reported at once, that it was difficult for even a seasoned observer to separate credible news from speculation. This is also the case for the war of 1484. "If I were to write all that I hear," Pietro Bembo warned in a dispatch dated 23 October 1484, "it would yield many lies and much nonsense. Leaving all of this to one side I will tell you those things that seem to have some substance and credibility."¹⁶

This dependence on sources also explains a marked feature of the two authors in their writings on the Moldavian-Ottoman war: the facts about the choice of the target, the military preparations, the diplomatic contacts leading up to and subsequent the campaign are much more detailed and precise than the facts reported on the way in which the war itself unfolded. The reason is self-evident. The diplomacy and the preparations took place before their eyes or, at least, in their immediate vicinity, while when it came to the conquest of Kilia and Akkerman the two Venetians were a long way from the events. For this reason, the campaign is related in a rather summary fashion, but even this version of events is important because it allows us a glimpse into how contemporaries speculated about the course of the war. The Venetian reports mirror the contradictory reports that were circulating on a large range of topics such as the Sultan's deeds or Stephen the Great's reaction. The texts written by the *bailo* or by the secretary of the Senate are not in themselves any closer to "the truth" than the narrative sources, rather, they comprise merely another version of the war of 1484. Besides, there is no need to exaggerate a dichotomy between the reports of the Venetian agents in the Ottoman Empire and the narrative sources. Many chronicles include in their text the official documents on which they drew upon, and which they are know only in such copies, since the originals have been lost; the Venetian chronicles are exemplary

16 Archivio di Stato Venezia, Fund Senato Secreta. Dispacci Costantinopoli (hereinafter ASV SDC), Filza 1A (1484–1557), doc. f 16a: "Se volesse dir tute le cose che per iornata so alde incoreria in molte bugie e vanita. Ma metandole daparte vegniro<?> in quelle cosse che ami par di qualche sustantia e credulita".

in this regard. This is the case with the works of Domenico Malipiero¹⁷ and Marino Sanudo the Younger,¹⁸ to mention only the best-known examples. In these works, the narrative is structured as a diary recording year by year events considered important for Venetian history, interspersed with the official documents which serve as primary sources and evidence for the narrative text. The same procedure is followed for the war of 1484. In his monograph on Kilia and Akkerman, Nicolae Iorga highlights how information from Bembo and Dario is preserved in the work that Marino Sanudo the Younger dedicated to the Doges of Venice.¹⁹

Of the reports sent from the Ottoman Empire to Venice only twenty, written in Constantinople, were signed by the *bailo*, while other twenty-two, written in Constantinople or for the most part in Adrianople, are attributed to the secretary Giovanni Dario. The reports were written in Venetian dialect. Pietro Bembo preferred to send his information in plain-text, using cipher only once and only for a fragment of one report. On this occasion, the *bailo* remarks “I will write you these few words in cipher, even though I do not think it necessary.”²⁰ The passage refers to a Venetian island which the Sultan had his eye on (*questo Signor habi molto lochio*).²¹ We do not know exactly why Pietro Bembo did not recourse to cipher more often for his reports. One reason may be that he most often sent his documents by sea, where they could not fall into the wrong hands, although this is not a completely satisfactory explanation. Even though Bembo himself stated that “[since the sea route] seems to me a way to write without anxiety, I will tell you the following things which seem important to me,”²² we would need further evidence to strengthen this hypothesis. Giovanni Dario by contrast had recourse to cipher more often, using the code names for the Sultan (“Alma”) and the kingdom of Hungary (“Intrepidus”) equally often.

Written in two different centres of the empire, the reports of the two agents did not overlap but rather complemented one another. “What I have missed, Giovanni Dario’s perspicacity will supply” (*in quella cosa che io mancharo el circonspecto Ser Zuan Dario supplira*), Pietro Bembo wrote in a letter

17 Malipiero, *Annali Veneti*, *passim*.

18 Sanudo il Giovane, *Le vite*, *passim*.

19 N. Iorga, *Studii istorice asupra Chiliei și Cetății Albe* (Bucharest, 1899), 162; documents mentioned by this author are published in Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 27–28.

20 ASV, SDC, F. 1A, doc. f. 9a: “Io metero queste poche de parole in zifra benche secondo mi non bisognaria”.

21 Ibid.

22 ASV, SDC, F.1A, doc. f. 10a: “parendome haver modo de poter scriver senza sospeto dissi quelle cose che secondo el iuditio mio me perse importante”.

of 1st June 1484.²³ The difference in temperament between the *bailo* and the secretary is a feature both emphasised frequently. Each found occasion to criticise the other in their dispatches to the Venetian government. On many occasions, Bembo and Dario expressed diametrically opposed opinions regarding Ottoman intentions and the policy which Venice should adopt toward the Porte. Pietro Bembo held that the peace concluded with the Ottomans was nothing more than a cease-fire and that sooner or later the Sultan would launch a new war to conquer the last Venetian territories in the Levant. The *bailo* thus considered that the *Serenissima* should be prepared for a future conflict and should take timely steps to be ready. Giovanni Dario, by contrast, thought that the peace should be maintained at any cost, since any renewal of hostilities could only end unfavourably for Venice.

Despite their differences of opinion, both were equally anxious about the Sultan's military might. Thus, as soon as Bayezid II began to prepare for war in the spring of 1484, the Venetian agents immediately raised the alarm. The concentration of land forces and the intense activity in the shipyards already revealed Sultan Bayezid's martial intentions early in 1484. However, it remained to be seen where the Emperor's troops would march. Rumors indicated that Moldavia would be the target of the expedition, but as the Venetian agents' reports indicated, there was still considerable doubt in this regard.²⁴ Witnesses were especially surprised by the scale of the preparations. The great numbers of ships, artillery pieces and soldiers pointed toward a large-scale operation and suggested that the Sultan thought that a war against Stephen the Great would be no easy undertaking.

It was the work on the fleet which first caught the attention of Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario. On 15 April 1484 Pietro Bembo reported that the imperial fleet was preparing in great haste to attack the realm of "*Stefano Carabogdan ulacho*."²⁵ The *bailo* also sketched a clear plan of the campaign. The fleet was to enter the Black Sea and sail as far as Kilia, "a sea port ten miles from Akkerman" where it would enter the Danube.²⁶ The land troops would cross "Greece" and then Greater Wallachia till they arrived at the walls of Akkerman. The Ottoman

23 Ibid., doc. f. 9a.

24 Ovidiu Cristea, "Antecedentele campaniei lui Baiazid al II-lea în Moldova. Noi mărturii venețiene", *Ștefan cel Mare la cinci secole de la moartea sa*, eds. Petronel Zahariuc and Silviu Văcaru, (Iași, 2004), 227–247.

25 ASV SDC, filza 1A, doc. f3a.

26 Ibid.: "l'armata intrando in mar mazor fino a licostomo luogo maritimo luntano da moncastro mia X. intrando per la fiumera".

forces were to depart at the beginning of May.²⁷ The report also contains a preliminary estimate of the strength of the Ottoman navy. Bembo reckons that there were around 100 galleys and *parandarie* and remarked that there were no *fuste* of lesser tonnage. The latter were the only ships that would be able to navigate the Danube, so that their absence casts some doubts on the campaign's aim. The *bailo* surmised that a naval attack on Zichia was also possible, but some voices claimed that the fleet would sail the straits of the Aegean and the land forces would march through Anatolia. Bembo noted that transport ships for artillery, weapons, and provisions were also being built alongside the warships, and that these could supply and support the land army.²⁸ This information is also repeated in a report dated a week later. At this point, the *bailo* expressed his doubts that the Sultan would take part in the campaign. The problems encountered by Mehmed II's expedition in 1476, and the defense which Stephen the Great put up at that time might have caused Bayezid not to accompany his army but rather to await the outcome of the campaign at Adrianople.²⁹ This statement suggests how hard it was for the Venetian agent to sort through the multitude of rumors that circulated in Constantinople. Even in April, as in the previous month, real news overlapped with unreliable rumor, yielding a confused picture; we might even suspect that the Ottomans intentionally fed this uncertainty. Anticipating the reproaches that such contradictory reports might elicit from his homeland, the Venetian *bailo* declared that nobody was placed well enough to discern or appraise the intentions of

27 Ibid.: "Questo Signor con lo exercito terestre per la Grecia per el paese de la Ulachia mazor fino alle mure de Moncastro. La partida de l'uno e de l'altro exercito sera all intrada de mazo".

28 Ibid.: "L'armata se zudega habij a esser tra galie et parandarie numero 100 de la qual armata molti che dicono che non essendo fusti piccoli de intrar in el fiume significa che questo apparato non sia per quel locho. Et io zudegando de si dicho che quellj navilij coverti siano per condur bombarde et altre munitioni, biscoti o farine de la qual ne ha fato gran preparamento per soccorso dele zente terestre che andarano piu presti e lizieri. Ne sera gran fato che qualche parte de quellj fusti vadano per edificare qualche forteza al Coppa ruinato l'ano passato da zichi et offender quelli se i poterano. (...) Alguni dicono l'armata haver a uscir dal Streto et le zente terestre passar su la Turchia. Ne e algun che fermamente dicho dove la sia per andare".

29 ASV SDC, F1A, doc. f 4a: "io vedo haver prepara<to> moltij fusti grossi coverti neli qual metera munition, farine e biscoti de li qual ne ha appena grande summa per esser con l'esercito terestre piu prest e lizieri contra esso carabogdan. Io tegno chel signor con la persona non se habij a movere d'andrinopoli ma mandar le zente li parera a quella imp<re>xa. Poria etiam esser non tolesse quel partido havendo senti esso ulacho esser ben preparato per la defesa sua de la qual cognosse chel el padre altra volta non no capito bene".

the Ottomans, since these changed on a daily basis.³⁰ We need not deduce from this that the Sultan had not chosen a direction for his attack, but rather that he deliberately let it be believed that he could strike in several directions.

One month later the uncertainty still persisted, drawn out because an envoy was expected from Hungary.³¹ We might suppose that the Turks circulated rumors intentionally to hide the real objective of the campaign, which could have endangered their negotiations with Matthias Corvinus. Without actually establishing a connection between the two events, the Venetian reports reveal that the Sultan did not wish to launch an attack before the envoy arrived from Hungary—in other words, until he knew that Matthias Corvinus had agreed and sworn to a truce. The report of 18 May, announcing the imminent arrival of the Hungarian envoy, casts considerable doubt on Bembo's dispatch of the previous month. It was certain that the fleet was bound for the Black Sea, but Pietro Bembo thought an attack on Kilia and Akkerman doubtful, because "it seems that these places do not merit such preparations, nor such large bombards."³² The *bailo* reported that the fleet constructed at Gallipoli had received orders to join the ships gathered at Constantinople, and that the land army had been reinforced with a number of artillery pieces. Another significant piece of news was that the Sultan had granted foreign merchants freedom of trade in the Black Sea with no obligation to pay any taxes, on condition that they transport provisions and provide other logistical support for the Moldavian campaign.³³

Such freedom of trade granted in a sea that was increasingly controlled by the Ottoman Empire was a sure sign that the fleet was aimed at an adversary

30 ASV SDC, F.1A, doc. f. 7a: "Non credo alcuna che sia possibile poter considerar ne iudicare li sentimenti di questi Signori turchi per rason alguna perche le cosse sue sono per zornata mutabele".

31 ASV SDC, F.1A, doc. f. 7a of 24 May: "Aspetavano l'ambassador del re d'Ongaria su el qual tegno sera el movimento de quella maxime circa l'impresa del Ulacho che ancor gran cossa e affar iudicio che tanta armata cussi potente per simel locho voiano poria esser qualche parte e del resto tolesse altro camino e si toca la volta da basso non so considerare dovi possi andare.

32 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f. 6a: "Questa armata de questo Signor per la ultima mia dechiaraj el iudicio mio era che la dovesse andar in mar mazor contra el ulacho. Dapoi continuamente quelle se e anda preparando e cargando molte grosse bombarde e molte altre artelarie che a molti fa creder che non sia per andar contra quel ulacho parendo i luogi di quello non meritar tanti preparamenti ne cussi grosse bombarde et che i so pensieri deba esser altrove".

33 Ibid.: [Bayezid II] "fato proclamar che ognuno possino con navilij intrar in mar mazor cum vituarie e delle altre cose necessarie per la so armata senza pagar de qui commercio ne altra angaria".

somewhere in the Black Sea region, so that despite the *bailo's* reservations the only possible target was Moldavia. Furthermore, the last few doubts began to vanish toward the end of May. On the 22nd of that month the Sultan left Adrianople and the fleet joined him at the beginning of June. In the meantime, the squadron constructed at Gallipoli joined the main fleet at Constantinople on 27th May. According to Bembo, there were 50 of these new ships; 24 light galleys, 4 heavy galleys, 12 *fuste*, and 10 *parandarie*.³⁴ All in all the fleet numbered around 200 ships, of which 40 were light galleys and 20 were heavy galleys.³⁵ The total number may seem inflated compared to Nicoară Beldiceanu's estimates in two monographs on the war of 1484, in which he concluded that the effective fleet in the war of 1484 was not more than 100 ships.³⁶ This figure also conflicts with the exaggerated numbers in the narrative sources which talk of 350 warships.³⁷ Pietro Bembo's figure lies between these two extremes and is possibly closest to the facts. Unlike the narrative texts which intentionally increase the number of Ottoman ships to convey the idea of the Sultan's limitless power, the *bailo's* report had to be as accurate as possible in its numbers, so that the Venetian Republic could take measures to defend itself. The careful enumeration of different types of warships and transport ships built at Bayezid's command also sustain the accuracy of the report. However, Pietro Bembo himself casts doubt on the estimate of 200 ships as, on the day of departure, he wrote in a report to the Doge that "the fleet has left this port with 100 ships or a little more and has entered the Black Sea."³⁸

More important than establishing the exact numbers of the Ottoman fleet is the effect that the Sultan's naval power had. Giovanni Dario notes that the ships carried cannons and oarsmen "in numbers never seen in the past,"³⁹ and

34 A low tonnage ship which could be handled by a single individual (Wright, *Bartolomeo Minio*, 179).

35 ASV SDC, f. 1A, doc. f 8a of 28 May.

36 N. Beldiceanu, "La campagne ottomane de 1484; ses préparatifs militaires et sa chronologie", *Revue des Etudes Roumaines* v–vi (1960): 67; N. Beldiceanu, "La conquête des cités marchandes de Kilia et de Cetatea Albă par Bayezid II", *Südost Forschungen* 23 (1964): 63. This estimate is to be found in the reports of Marino Sanudo the Younger and Domenico Malipiero. The latter does not in fact give a total figure, saying that there were 100 galleys and *fuste*, which suggests that other ships were part of the fleet as well (Malipiero, *Annali Veneti*, 134).

37 *Historie di Messer Marco Guazzo*, (Venice, 1545), f. 30r; Sansovino, *Historia*, 281v; Beldiceanu, "La campagne ottomane": 69.

38 ASV SDC, f. 1A, doc. f 9a: "esser stato hozi da matina la levata de larmata de questo porto con navilij cento o qualche piu et intrati in mar mazor".

39 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 48: "che mai per lo passato non son sta meio".

Bembo emphasised that the fleet inspired fear “not just because of the number of ships, but because of the numbers of artillery pieces of all kinds, which if I were to relate would not be believed.”⁴⁰ These words remind us of the famous phrase that “the sea seemed like a forest”⁴¹ written by an eye-witness to the siege of Negroponte in 1470, and the terrifying effect that a large number of warships could have. It is possible that Bayezid was counting on exactly this psychological effect when he drew up his plans for the attack on Moldavia in 1484. The fleet certainly played a tactical role, providing logistical support for the land troops, but it was also there to dissuade and discourage. An overly large fleet could not have been justified by any potential counter-strike on the part of the Moldavians, even though it seems that a naval force existed,⁴² but rather by the desire to strike fear into the besieged and force their surrender.

Compared with the fairly exact information on the Sultan’s naval power, Bembo’s and Dario’s reports convey less about the land forces. We can establish from other sources that the expedition of 1484 included troops from the imperial household, janissaries, sipahi, and *azap* warriors.⁴³ Giovanni Dario reported that the latter, irregular infantry troops, played an important role in the 1484 campaign;⁴⁴ they served as oarsmen aboard the fleet and during the siege showed themselves to be fierce fighters.⁴⁵ The *bailo*’s information is even more ambiguous. Bembo restricts himself to mentioning in vague wording, in a report of 28 May on the launch of the expedition, that Bayezid had set off for Moldavia with a force larger than his father had ever assembled.⁴⁶ Such a statement is hardly informative. It is possible that it is simply a figure of speech to give some idea of the scale of preparations, and even if we take Bembo at his word, we have yet to establish the maximum size of Mehmed II’s army.

40 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 7a: “li apparati de questo so armata certo tremenda non tanto per el numero di navilij ma per el numero de le arteiarie de ogni condition che se le volesse dire non seria creduto”.

41 Malipiero, *Annali veneti*, 51: “Il mar pareo un bosco a sentirlo a dir, par cosa incredibile, ma a vederlo è cosa stupenda”.

42 N. Beldiceanu mentions the capturing of a Moldavian “capudan” of Kilia, which could suggest that Stephen the Great had a number of warships at Kilia (Beldiceanu, “La conquête”: 65).

43 Beldiceanu, “La conquête”: 61–62.

44 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 126.

45 Ibid.: “I hano vogado el remo et in quelle sono sta acerrimi combatanti”.

46 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 8a: “E per quanto dice questi nostri che se atrovavano divulgasse esser cum numero maor che mai fece el padre drezato pur alla volta de Stefano voivoda ulacho”.

While Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario were not especially interested in the cavalry and infantry as such, the cannons captured their attention greatly. On several occasions the reports mention the number of canons gathered for the campaign. In this era artillery was highly effective psychologically: its devastating effects and terrific noise made a great impression on contemporaries.⁴⁷ There was also a practical side to such information. Venice, mistress of a number of important fortifications in the Peloponnese, had an interest in learning details of this essential siege weaponry. For Bembo the cannon represented the very foundation of Ottoman expansion. The only way to eliminate Turkish superiority in this field was to ban all trade in the metal from which the guns were made.⁴⁸ Such an idea was about three centuries old in fact. The Papacy had already tried to stop Christian merchants from exporting strategic material (iron, weapons, timber) to Muslim lands at the Third Lateran Council of 1179.⁴⁹ Repeated by subsequent Western church councils, this measure sought to weaken the military power of Islam. Western merchants who furnished the enemies of the Cross with arms and materials were threatened with excommunication and the confiscation of their goods. The interdiction had some effect, without putting a stop entirely to this illicit trade.

At the end of the fifteenth century the Venetian *bailo* proposed that the measure be revived for “*el metalo del stagno*” from which cannon were cast. This was the only way to prevent Ottoman superiority in fire-power, a superiority which, in the *bailo*’s opinion, was likely to become ever more devastating. The ban should be announced by the Church and should concern all Christian nations.⁵⁰ It may seem surprising that the agent of a republic which drew a

47 Frederic C. Lane, *Storia di Venezia*, (Torino, 1978), 412; Simon Pepper, “Fortress and Fleet: the Defence of Venice’s Mainland Greek Colonies in the Late Fifteenth Century”, *War, Culture and Society in Renaissance Venice. Essays in Honour of John Hale*, eds. David S. Chambers, Cecil H. Clough and Michael E. Mallett, (London-Rio Grande, 1993), 29.

48 ASV SDC Filza 1A, doc. f 13a: “le qual bombarde essendo sta augumento de questo so stado. E considerando che quelle non posse far senza el metalo del stagno necessario seria la prohibition de quello da esser messo in questo locho; la qual prohibition convegneria esser universal a tute nation christiane; e pero bisognaria fosse prohibito per la chexia”.

49 *Les conciles oecumeniques 2. Les décrets de Nicée I à Latran V*, (Paris, 1994), 480.

50 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 13a: “Sentimo pur come fo avanti dito che qualche navilio de questa armata quando de qui parte per fortuna che haveno receveto qualche senestro e perduto qualche bombarde de quelle so grosse le qual bombarde essendo sta augumento de questo so stado. E considerando che quelle non posse far senza el metalo el stagno necessario seria la prohibition de quello da esser messo in questo locho. La qual prohibition convegneria esser universal a tute nation christiane e pero bisognaria fosse prohibito per la chexia pero reverementemente aricordo alla S. V. parendolj cussi operar non parendo o

large part of its income from the trade with the Ottoman Empire should call on the Papacy to ban trade in the mentioned products. The pope, however, was the only power who could proclaim a crusade and likewise represented the only authority that might impose such a ban for all Christian powers. Bembo's proposal was hardly likely to be adopted, but it was driven by the observation that the Turks were much better equipped with strategically important goods than were the Venetians. It was less costly to prevent the Ottomans from making cannons than it was to reinforce an entire network of fortresses.

Finally, some information is given on the Ottoman allies. Giovanni Dario offers some interesting facts about the part played by the Crimean Tartars, although the participation of Vlad the Monk, prince of Wallachia, is ignored.⁵¹ The Venetian secretary was impressed by what he had learned of the austerity of these "knights of the steppe". During the 1484 campaign, they showed an incredible endurance. After the siege of Kilia, Giovanni Dario mentioned that the Tartars, "ready to fulfill the Sultan's every wish," were sent with a vanguard of the imperial army to Akkerman. Although half-dead with exhaustion, they crossed a desert region in one night and one day, without eating or drinking "because they were vigorous and felt neither hunger nor thirst."⁵² Dario's opinion here takes its place in a long line of documents attesting to Tartar military prowess from the thirteenth century onward. By the fifteenth century this tradition could be traced back to the epoch of Genghis Khan's victories. A century later Western observers again emphasised the Tartars' unusual hardiness. During the "Long War" of 1593–1606 Tommaso Contarini, the Venetian ambassador to Prague found that only the Tartars could endure the cold in Hungary

non possando cussi far fazone conscientia alli audienti che se ne astegni a lassar tal utele a chi li voleno perche senza operation questo e maor inconveniente che de azali o altro metallo che se ne meta e de tute altre cosse prohibite per la chiezia de le qual nesono meie forniti cha nuj".

51 The "valah" voievod mentioned by Dario in the report of 14 July is Stephen the Great and not Vlad the Monk, as the editor of the text believed: Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 64 and note 5.

52 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 124–126: "Me vien dito cosse miraculose de lausterita de la vita de quelli tartari et de la tolerantia granda che hano a le fadige. Et di esser cum effeto quando che costoro che sono si uxi se fanno gran maravelia et vien [pur] dito chi vene a trovar costoro pui de 90^M. et chel signor dubitandose de la sede li ha mandadi avanti idest amoncastro. et che costoro andono mezi morti cavalcando tuta la note et tuto el zorno per passar quel deserto senza manzar et senza beber. et che loro era gaiardi e non sentivano ne fame ne sede et monzevanole soe cavale et vivevano cum quello. li fono molto acarozadi. et loro promesse de esser presti a ogni comando de questo signor".

and that their horses got by on very little food.⁵³ Unlike other Western sources, the Venetian secretary remarked that after Bayezid II's troops had withdrawn, the Tartars launched a raid on Moldavia, taking advantage of the fact that many of Stephen the Great's subject levies had returned to their homes. Since the report containing this information is dated 8 October 1484, the raid is likely to have taken place at the beginning of September.

The information on Stephen the Great's military preparations is even more brief. In opposition with the abundance of news from the Ottoman side, Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario report very little on Stephen the Great's actions. Even when it is there, the information about Moldavia is vague and very tenuous. The reason is not a lack of interest on their part, but rather the impossibility of obtaining trustworthy news. It is likely that whatever Bembo and Dario could learn was based on Ottoman sources, since any messengers coming from Moldavia itself would have had awaken suspicion at the Sublime Porte. This situation held true for the entire campaign, so that the two Venetian agents often reported events with a considerable delay because of the absence of credible information.

Before the start of the campaign news on the Turks' adversaries is restricted to mere mentions. On 22 April Pietro Bembo underlined that Stephen the Great was ready for the invasion and recalled that Mehmed II's previous attempt had failed. A month later Giovanni Dario passed on some confused news brought by ship from Akkerman. On the one hand, it was understood that the Moldavian prince, unable to defend his coastal territories from a far superior force, had chosen to retreat to the interior of his realm; on the other hand, in the same sentence Dario, mentioned Stephen's intention to defend a river crossing. This information is confirmed by a different source which mentions that Stephen the Great intended to engage with the Turks at Oblucița.⁵⁴ The same news from Akkerman had Stephen attempting to negotiate with the Crimean Tartars, thereby escape their attack. The source casted doubts on the outcome of such diplomatic initiative as the khan was a Muslim, a vassal of the Porte and because it was natural to ally with the most powerful camp.⁵⁵ Dario also

53 Eugenio Alberi (ed.), *Le Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato durante il secolo decimosesto*, VI, (Florence, 1857), 230.

54 Iorga, *Chilia și Cetatea Albă*, 157; Dumitru Nastase, "Ștefan cel Mare împărat", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, XVI (1998): 70; Maria Magdalena Székely and Ștefan S. Gorovei, "Semne și minuni pentru Ștefan voievod. Note de mentalitate medievală", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, XVI (1998): 81.

55 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 48: "Dapoi veramente e sopravvenuto un altro navilio da Moncastro lo qual dice pur questa fama de landar de costoro a quella parte tandem haver sbigotidi

mentioned that the prince of Moldavia had withdrawn all his men from the plains into the mountains. Similar measures had been taken during the previous Sultan's campaign. The repeated references to these "scorched earth" tactics in 1484 suggest that Stephen the Great was expecting an invasion. It is thus all the more surprising that in a report from 7 February 1485 Giovanni Dario claimed that Stephen had lost Kilia and Akkerman "because he did not believe [that they would be attacked], and did not take the necessary measures." According to Dario, who maintained that he was repeating an Ottoman opinion, if Akkerman had been garrisoned by 500 men with enough powder for the cannon, not even an army made up of the entire world would have been able to take it.⁵⁶ This is a spectacular but obviously exaggerated claim. Nevertheless, we may ask some questions. Did Stephen the Great hope that the blow would fall elsewhere? Was he negligent, or did he overestimate Kilia's and Akkerman's capacity to resist attack? Did he wish to repeat the strategy of 1476 when he had waited for the Ottoman forces to come deeper into Moldavian territory? Was he hoping that help would come from Matthias Corvinus? Was there in the final analysis some unknown quantity that stopped him from defending himself as he had done countless times in his 27-year reign?

Bembo's and Dario's reports are mostly silent on all these questions. The first two problems are interdependent. If Stephen did not believe that an attack was imminent, it is highly probable that he did not take any special defensive measures. Yet the two Venetians give contradictory answers to these questions. The statement that the villages in the south of Moldavia were abandoned would indicate that Stephen the Great was expecting a new invasion. There are other documents that support this point of view, and we can suppose that by the end of May the Moldavian prince already knew where Bayezid would strike. By the same token, the claim that Stephen the Great did not reinforce Akkerman is suspect. It appears late in Dario's correspondence—nearly six months after the fall of the city—and in a very particular context. The Venetian secretary was reporting on the construction of a new Ottoman fleet in 1485 and

quelli signori i qualli non potendo remediar a le terre maritime contra tante artellarie tande force et tanto impeto hano drizato li soi pensieri a star pui forti che porano ala campagna et su lo passo de la fiumara et che hano pur speranza chel tartaro non li dara contra per che pur li parla et promette superficialmente ma mi dubito glandamente che li cagara a dosso per esser macometano e per esser anche pui natural inclinacion ali homeni acostarse a li plui potenti".

56 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 222: "... como ha fato Stefano vaivoda lano passado elqual ha perso quele do tere <=Kilia and Akkerman> per non haver creduto ne proveduto che se moncastro havesse habuto V^C fanti frostieri e polvere da bombardar a quello che dixeno turchi medemi tuto el mundo non lo toleva".

was pleading for defensive measures. For Dario, the reference to the campaign of 1484 is one argument in a dispute with the *bailo* Pietro Bembo. Ultimately, to invoke Stephen the Great's "negligence" is to make a moral argument. Giovanni Dario's report ends with the words that it is better "to take steps in good time, at whatever cost, [than] to believe rumors and remain defenseless against evident peril, as voivode Stephen did last year."⁵⁷

Pietro Bembo's reports of 1484 supported the idea that Stephen the Great did indeed take defensive measures for the two fortresses on shores of the Black Sea. The *bailo*, collecting his news from eyewitnesses, stated unequivocally that "that place at Kilia strengthened with many men and so well defended that everybody believed that it could not be taken."⁵⁸ It is hard to see how the Moldavian prince could have taken steps to defend Kilia and not have given the same attention to Akkerman.

Answers for the remaining questions were barely offered. One of the rumors which Bembo and Dario passed on had it that Kilia and Akkerman would have been able to resist a siege. It is hard to say what credence we should lend this point of view since other information claims exactly the contrary. Those who hoped that Turkish power could be broken again invoked the memory of Mehmed II's defeat in 1476 as an argument, but others could argue that the greater number of warships, cannons and soldiers increased Bayezid II's chances of success.

Giovanni Dario mentioned in passing Stephen the Great's hoped to await the Ottomans inland, but it is difficult to know how reliable such statement is. More probable Dario expressed its own opinion or Turkish ideas about the strategy adopted by their enemy. In 1484, due to the overwhelming odds, Stephen adopted a defensive stance hoping that his fortresses could resist the Ottoman attack. The Venetian reports do not mention that Stephen was expecting any foreign aid. References to Matthias Corvinus gathering his forces on the Ottoman border come only after the campaign had ended, when such action could not have helped Moldavia. As the Venetian agents emphasised, this was a matter of the Hungarian king plotting to obtain Kilia by negotiation.

The Ottoman fleet weighed anchor on 1 June, bound for Kilia and Akkerman.⁵⁹ This stirred mixed feelings of relief and anxiety in the Venetian agents; relief because the attack was not aimed at Venetian possessions, anxiety because

57 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 222 "et provederse a bonora cum qualche spexa che far fidi su opinion e romagnir descoberti cum manifesto pericolo como ha fato Stefano vaivoda lano passato".

58 ASV SDC, F.1A, doc. f 12a of 14 July 1484: "el qual loco del chelj era ben fornito de zente e munito siche universalmente e tenuto non sia per haverlo".

59 ASV SDC f. 1A, doc. 9a; Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, doc. 21a of 31 May.

such an attack was highly probable in the future. “We can set our minds at rest, though there is no rest to be had if we think on things to come,” writes Pietro Bembo. “Whoever does not think into the future is not thinking right.”⁶⁰ Clearly, for the *bailo*, the attack on Moldavia, even though it did not directly impact the Venetian interests, affected the interests of all Christendom.⁶¹ Bembo is not explicit, but it is possible that he was referring to the Sultan’s wish to conquer the last important commercial centres in the Black Sea still free from Ottoman rule. Giovanni Dario was more precise, arguing that a success against Stephen the Great would open “a very dangerous gate into Poland.”⁶²

In the Venetian agents’ opinion, the Ottomans’ chances of success were quite high. The only hope was God’s help, absolutely indispensable for any Christian power at war with the infidels. Bembo hoped that divine aid would bring about Bayezid’s unsuccessful return from the campaign,⁶³ while Giovanni Dario was much more skeptical. For the Venetian secretary, the forecasts were far from favourable. Even the weather was on the Sultan’s side, almost as though he had ordered it especially—“a sign that God is helping him [as a punishment] for our sins.”⁶⁴

Neither Venetian agent seems to have given much thought to the motives for the campaign. Giovanni Dario suggested that one reason might have been the results of the Hungarian-Ottoman negotiations. Kilia’s and Akkerman’s place on the Hungarian-Ottoman treaty of 1483/4 is still a matter of debate. Without clearing up all the controversy stemming from the analysis of the text of the treaty, one of Giovanni Dario’s letters adds new elements to our knowledge. A *dispaccio* of 8 October 1484, summing up the events of the summer of that year, mentions that the Ottomans had intercepted letters from the king of Hungary to his envoy. They were instructions in which Matthias laid claim to Kilia “which is to be subject of the crown together with everything that Stephen had ruled over illegitimately” and asked the Sultan not to attempt any undertaking against that town. After reading these letters Bayezid reportedly set off for Moldavia immediately, conquered the fortress and on his return

60 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 8a: “azo meter possi li animi in quieto benche quieto non se possi haver pensando de le cosse future. Che chi non le pensa non ha bon parer”.

61 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 3a: “Questa tal imprexa toiandola sera mancho danosa alle cose di christiani tamen quella otegnando la acressera la reputatione la qual o pur troppo: se Dio ne desse gran che reussisse con vergogna”.

62 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 50, doc. 21a: “lavrira una porta molto pericolosa contro pollana”.

63 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 3a.

64 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 62: “et fali un tempo a domandon de bocha et par ben che dio li aiuta per li peccati nostri”.

sent an emissary to the Hungarian court to announce the victory.⁶⁵ The report was intended to argue that Stephen the Great's fortresses were not covered by the Hungarian-Ottoman treaty. Furthermore, Matthias Corvinus is said to have been interested only in Kilia, on the basis of a Hungarian garrison holding the place between 1448 and 1465, but there was no mention of Akkerman. According to Dario, it was a matter of negotiating over Kilia, even after the peace as such had already been sealed. To thwart this attempt, the Sultan broke off negotiations, marched on Moldavia and conquered the fortress in question. From this perspective, halting the campaign after the successful end of both sieges can be explained by Bayezid's wish to forestall a possible Hungarian riposte.

Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario did not mention the route of the army and the fleet, but this has been reconstructed from other sources. The army left the capital for Adrianople at the beginning of May,⁶⁶ and marched onward to Moldavia at the end of the month. The fleet weighed anchor on 1 June.⁶⁷ It seems that the Hungarian ambassador accompanied the Sultan's army from Adrianople as far as the Danube. The envoy then set out for home after crossing the river at Isaccea.⁶⁸ It is most likely that by then the ambassador knew where the Ottoman troops were headed. The route was probably the same as that of the 1476 expedition, when the army led by Mehmed II followed the Black Sea coast to Varna, and then crossed the Dobrudja.

Any reconstruction of the campaign based on Bembo's and Dario's account would be very vague and imprecise. Both Venetians depended on news reaching Constantinople from the front. Official news was slow to arrive, which Giovanni Dario took as clear proof of the difficulty of the campaign.⁶⁹ Equally, a number of unsubstantiated rumors were spreading about how the expedition was faring.⁷⁰

65 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 124: "fono intercepte intercepte lettere del Re che li scriveva dovesse dir a questo Signor come lycostomo era pertinentia de la corona. benche Stefano lo possedesse mala fide. et che lo pregasse che non li desse impazo. Questo signor ando de longo et fece el fato so et de retorno li mando anunciar la victoria".

66 Beldiceanu, "La campagne ottomane": 74.

67 ASV SDC f. 1A, doc. 9a; Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, doc. 21a of 31 May.

68 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 124; Dario invalidates the circulating rumors that the Hungarian envoy had been installed at Sofia: "non fo vero che limbassador hungaro fosse astalado a sofia. Ma dal passo del danubio estato licenciato et dapoi e partito".

69 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 66: "Ma inverita non se sente cossa neuna cun fundamento. Et la tardita persistessa demonstra la difficulta de la impresa".

70 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 10a: "molte sono le cosse che de qui se dicono per le qual se ne poria far qualche iuditio quando fosseno vere".

Pietro Bembo remarked that it was the word on the street against the word coming from the Ottoman camp. According to the *bailo*, the latter could be believed, at least as far as they did not exaggerate the Sultan's martial deeds.⁷¹ Just as in 1476, the campaign was not without difficulty. The Sultan arrived at Kilia on 5 July.⁷² According to Pietro Bembo, the fleet had not been able to enter the Danube.⁷³ We might suppose that Stephen the Great had taken steps to block the river just as his grandfather, Alexander the Good, had done in 1429.⁷⁴ The Ottomans in their turn had used such tactics in 1474, when they besieged Scutari/Shkodër and stopped the Venetian fleet from coming to the aid of the besieged.⁷⁵ However, Bembo's report does not dwell on these points, and it is more likely that the ships' large tonnage stopped them from coming upstream. Previously, the *bailo* had expressed his doubts that the attack could be aimed at Moldavia, based on exactly this absence of lower-tonnage ships that could enter the Danube.⁷⁶ The bombardment of Kilia's walls could not begin straight away. Since they were unable to use the river, the Ottomans had been forced to disembark their guns at some distance and bring them twelve miles overland. Even after the artillery arrived in the Ottoman camp, its destructive effect only began to be felt after several days of intense bombardment.

Various reports circulated on the progress of the siege. There were a number of skeptics who believed that the Sultan would not be able to take Kilia because of its fortifications, its natural defenses, and large garrison.⁷⁷ The difficulties posed by Kilia's defenses were also evident in the previous campaign led by Mehmed II: heat, hunger, and disease. Pietro Bembo mentioned that the men

71 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. 12a: "siano parole che su le piace se parlano per quelli che da quel campo vieneno. Li qual pol esser ben creduti quando non sgiofano le cosse del Signor".

72 Beldiceanu, "La conquête": 65.

73 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. 12a: "e quellj de larmata non havendo possuto con i navilij intrar i<n> la boca del fiume".

74 Şerban Papacostea, "Caffa et la Moldavie face à l'expansion ottomane (1453–1484)", *Genovezii la Marea Neagra in sec. XIII–XIV*, (Bucharest, 1977), 146; Şerban Papacostea, "Kilia et la politique orientale de Sigismound de Luxembourg", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, xv (1976), 3: 431.

75 Malipiero, *Annali veneti*, I, 95.

76 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 3a.

77 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. 12a: "non li noxevano el qual loco del chelj era ben fornito de zente e munito siche universalmente e tenuto non sia per haverlo"; cf. Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, doc. 22a also from 14 July: "Alcuni disse che non laverà mai per el sito so molto forte; et incomodo alasedio".

and horses were very hungry,⁷⁸ but Giovanni Dario was more cautious, stating only that rations were short and that there were not enough supplies for a prolonged siege.⁷⁹ The secretary also passed on news to the opposite effect, that the besiegers had plenty of food and that the Sultan had made adequate provision.⁸⁰

There were also rumors that disease (probably plague) had broken out among the ground forces and the fleet, which Bembo attributed to hunger and to the other misfortunes (*sinistri*) which the Turks endured. For the *bailo* the news was unsurprising, since plague had also broken out in Constantinople and this was held to be the reason why Bayezid had chosen to reside at Adrianople on returning from campaign.⁸¹ Reports of a large-scale epidemic were probably exaggerated, but contained a grain of truth. On returning from Moldavia, one of the viziers, Mehmed Pasha, complained to Giovanni Dario that the “dust, heat and stench” of the expedition had been hard to endure.⁸² It is likely that the hardships of war were even worse for the common soldiers.

Along with the difficulties of the siege came the uncertainty about Stephen's movements. Giovanni Dario only mentioned the evacuation of southern Moldavia into the mountains. Bembo's reports offer more details, but these too contain a large dose of uncertainty. The *bailo* reported that the Sultan, uneasy about Stephen the Great, had left 20,000 men at the siege and had left in search of the enemy with the rest of his army. Bayezid was presumably looking for the Moldavian army to strike a decisive blow; Bembo expressed the hope that Stephen the Great was clever enough to avoid a battle with an Ottoman force greater than any before. The *bailo*'s way of thinking reflects very closely the strategy of the Italian *condottieri* who made a habit of delaying tactics, setting lengthy sieges of their enemies' castles and avoiding large-scale engagements. The Venetian Andrea Duodo gave similar advice in 1466; the Ottomans should

78 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 12a: “Item dicono che la carestia era grande si per li homini come per li cavalij”.

79 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 64: “le vituarie le qual vegnera manco al campo et non pora durar tanto”.

80 Ibid.: “Alchuni disse che le vituarie erano habundante per le provision grande”.

81 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 12a: “Ultimamente e sta dito esser el morbo grandissimo si in le zente de tera come in quelle de larmata che e da creder per le carestie e sinistri che receveno come per esser tuti questi paexi imbratadi de simel morbo (...) questo Signore habij a retornare dove non se puol intender ma credo sera in andrinopolj o in quelli confini che de qui non voia vegnire ne voria vegnisse per el morbo non havendo etiam a piacer de uqesto per el iuditio dognuno”.

82 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 102: “lor stentava in quella polvere caldane et feture de la mondavia”.

not be engaged on the battlefield, away from the safety of fortress walls.⁸³ In 1484, even the Sultan seemed to have given up the idea of a decisive engagement and according to Bembo this delaying tactic was the only one to pay off. If Kilia had held out, there was a chance that the Ottomans would have given up the siege because of the epidemics and other unfavourable circumstances (*cosse contrarie*).

The news that the Sultan had set off in search of Stephen's army is not found in any other sources. Probably this is simply the exaggeration of an actual event when one or more Ottoman detachments were sent on a reconnaissance mission. If a part of Bayezid's army had left Kilia, this could only have been justified as a hunt for the Moldavian prince. However, this does not seem to have happened in the summer of 1484. It is true that a Venetian chronicle citing letters sent by "Sier Piero Bembo quondam Sier Lorenzo Baylo nostro a Constantinopoli et di Juan Dario, Secretario nostro" mentions the defeat of 25,000 Moldavian cavalry, but this information is not found in any report sent by either agent.⁸⁴

It is perhaps of interest that all the news about the siege was sent by Bembo and Dario in their reports dated 14 July, which is exactly the day on which Kilia surrendered. Since the siege began on 5 July, the nine days which elapsed would not have been enough for a messenger to have travelled the distance from the Ottoman camp to Constantinople. In fact, the news of the fall of Kilia arrived on 27 July or a little earlier.⁸⁵ We should suppose that all news on the progress of military operations in any document dated prior to 27 July contains a large measure of uncertainty, and indeed the Venetian agents both drew their government's attention to this aspect.

Neither Bembo nor Dario give any further details of the siege of Kilia, perhaps because the fortress negotiated a capitulation fairly quickly, on the 14 July.

After the surrender, Bayezid granted his troops several days of plunder before setting off for Akkerman on the 19 July. The Tartars formed the vanguard of the army, though they might have been accompanied by Vlad the Monk's Wallachian troops as well.⁸⁶ The fortress was blockaded by sea and by land and

83 Andrea Duodo, *Pro Bello Peloponnensi*, in C. N. Sathas (ed.), *Documents inédits relatifs à l'histoire de la Grèce au Moyen Age*, VI, (Paris, 1885), VI, 114: "Non vi consiglio la bataja terrestre fuor di muri". This advice was for the Venetian commander Vettor Capello.

84 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 27.

85 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 68: "Adi 27 del passato notificaì p<er> le mie lettere ala S<ereni>ta vostra la presa di Licostomo". Since 27th July is the date of Dario's report, it is possible that the news reached them a day or two before.

86 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 124; Beldiceanu, "La conquête": 66.

endured an intense bombardment. If we can believe the Florentine Andrea Cambini's work, the garrison put up fierce resistance.⁸⁷ Ottoman sources in turn support this, but one of Giovanni Dario's reports casts doubt over this version. On 5 August the Venetian secretary drew up a detailed report on recent events in the Ottoman Empire. Before signing off, he mentioned the arrival of a messenger from the Sultan who had announced the conquest of Akkerman by the submission of the inhabitants; the news had spread everywhere and the order had been given for a general celebration next Sunday and for the streets to be covered, as was their custom. The messenger further said that the Sultan, after he had conquered the two towns, set off for another fortress intending to conquer the realm completely and give it to his troops to plunder; he could do this with the assurance that he would meet with no resistance, since his great number of troops made him the master of the battlefield.⁸⁸ Unlike other situations in which Giovanni Dario and Pietro Bembo registered various rumors, this time the news seems credible enough. A special courier sent by the sultan to Constantinople would not bring doubtful news, all the more so since the capital was ordered to prepare victory celebrations. The date of the messenger's arrival not only affects the chronology of the campaign of 1484, but casts doubt on what resistance might have been put up by Akkerman.

For the news to arrive in Constantinople on 5 August some time must have elapsed between the messenger's departure from the mouth of the Dniester and his arrival in the capital. The interval for news of the Sultan's success to be known in his capital in 1484 was approximately two weeks, perhaps a little shorter bearing in mind the importance of the news. Even if we admit that the emissary travelled in record time and that he was sent on his way before the surrender had been fully negotiated, the duration of the siege itself cannot have been more than a few days between the 22 July (the beginning of the siege) and the end of the month. That resistance only lasted a few days

87 Andrea Cambini, "Commentario de Andrea Cambini fiorentino della origine de Turchi et Imperio della casa Ottomana", *Commentarii delle cose de Turchi di Paulo Giovio e Andrea Cambini*, (Venice, 1541), 49r-v; cf. Cambini, "Dell'Origine de Turchi", 172r-172v; Ionel Căndea, "Cucerirea Cetății Albe de către turci la 1484 într-un izvor italian mai puțin cunoscut", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, 17 (1999): 27-31.

88 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 82: "lo qual anuncia anche la presa de Moncastro per dedicionne et hase comenzado sonar per la terra et messo ordene che domenega proxima se faza festa general et che se covra le strade secondo le lor uxanze. Dixe etiam el Signor habude le ditte terre haverse drizato verso unaltra forteza cum intention de subiugar tuto quel territorio. Et etiam per dar pasto ali soi. Et falo comodissimamente per che non ha contrasto et la potentia granda li ha fato habundantia inel campo".

is also suggested by a report from Corfu mentioning that the defenders and denizens of Akkerman, seeing the cruelty of the Turks at Kilia, handed over the keys of their fortress and submitted to the empire without further struggle.”⁸⁹ A rapid surrender of the fortress would also explain Dario’s strange statement of 7 February 1485 attributing the fall of Akkerman to Stephen the Great’s lack of foresight.⁹⁰ This accusation captures the logic most likely followed by those who decided, in the summer of that year, to surrender to the Turks. The argument was borrowed by the Ottomans and later by Dario.

The reference to the Sultan’s decision to march on a third fortress and thus conquer the whole realm is also interesting. A Venetian chronicle clearly reports that, after occupying the fortresses of “Licostomo” and “Moncastro,” Bayezid also took “Asprocastro.”⁹¹ Historiography has assumed that Moncastro and Asprocastro were two medieval names used concurrently for Akkerman. Recent research has pointed to the existence of a twin fortress, located close to Akkerman.⁹²

Regrettably there is no chance to compare Giovanni Dario’s information with any from Pietro Bembo for the period 14 July to 30 August. No report from the *bailo* has survived for this period. His dispatch for the last day of August briefly mentioned the result of the Moldavian campaign: Kilia and Akkerman

89 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 27: “li custodi et habitatori di Moncastro vedendo la crudeltà dil Turcho fata a Nicostomo li mandoe le chiave di ditta città, et senza altra bataglia air(?) quel Dominio”.

90 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 222.

91 Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 15, paragraph from the Venetian chronicle to 1500, with the title *Progenia della cassa de’Octomani*: “L’anno 1484, el Gran Turco tolse la imprexa contra Carabogdam, signor dela Valachia, fo im tempo de papa Inocencio VIII. Fato lo suo exercito, amdò personalmentte ala conquista de dito paese, comquestò Licostomo e Moncastro, ale marine del fiume, et una altra terra: Asprocastro”.

92 Matei Cazacu, “A propos de l’expansion polono-lituanienne au nord de la Mer Noire aux XIV^e–XV^e siècles: Czarnigrad, la “Cité Noire” de l’embouchure du Dniestr”, *Passé turcotatar. Present sovietique. Etudes offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*, ed. Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein and S. E. Wimbush, (Louvain-Paris, 1986), 99–122; Șerban Papacostea, “Maurocastrum și Akkerman: identitatea unei așezări medievale”, *Revista Istorică*, VI (1995) 11–12: 911–915, where the author concludes that “On the western shore of the Dniester Liman, on a high rock facing the sea, the “Black Sea” (*mavri thalassa*), stood the fortress of Maurokastron, Maurocastrum, Moncastro, “Cetatea Neagră”, dominating the urban settlement which was also surrounded by walls. Adjacent to it was the city proper, Akkerman, Bialgorod, Album Castrum or Akkerman, enclosed by walls which opened towards the mainland via three gates.”

surrendered on their own account, seeing that they could not withstand the Sultan's might.⁹³

The situation of these two towns after their surrender is well known thanks to the work of Nicolae Iorga and Nicoară Beldiceanu. Bayezid II oversaw the division of spoils, the introduction of Ottoman rule and the deportation of part of the population, the latter after a Moldavian-Ottoman peace had been agreed and the borders redrawn. Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario reported on the fate of the two fortresses after the war in different ways. The secretary made no allusion to the issues just mentioned, while the *bailo* referred to them on three occasions. Bayezid's organizational measures are described briefly in a few words, probably for lack of further detail: "He left that place [Akkerman] well strengthened with men and arms."⁹⁴ In contrast, Bembo dwelled at length on the fate of the inhabitants of the two towns. The *bailo*'s report of 30 August 1484 gives the impression of a massive deportation of the populace. Supposedly twenty thousand people were taken captive from these towns, whom the Sultan intended to settle into a deserted region (*luogo vacuo*), just as he had done with those taken captive from Caffa in 1475. The picture of so many people crammed onto the decks of ships stirs pity in the reader and might have given pause for thought to all of those who planned to make war on the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵ Bembo returned twice more to the situation of the captives. In the very next dispatch, dated 9 September 1484, he stated that the population which Bayezid wished to settle in the empire came only from Akkerman and that the number of twenty thousand was exaggerated. The *bailo* admitted that it was a matter of ten thousand at most.⁹⁶ The second reference to the displaced citizens of Akkerman comes in the last dispatch Pietro Bembo sent to Venice, dated 9 February 1485. The fate of the deported was still very difficult; promises which were made had not been fulfilled and the *bailo* doubted that they could be upheld. The deported families continued to lead a very hard life (*con miseria passa la so vita*).⁹⁷ The *bailo* was probably referring to the fate of those who had been settled in Constantinople: according to Ottoman documents, other captives had been taken to Eski Biga in Asia Minor.⁹⁸

93 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. 13a: "ha otenuto el cheli et moncastro datosse a quello voluntariamente poi che veteno non poter resister alla potentia de quello".

94 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 20a: "li qual lasso ben muniti de zente e munitione".

95 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 13a: "el numero de le qual dice mancho a XX^M cossa de gran pieta a vederle e de gran esempio a tuti quelli che pol mancho di lui".

96 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 14a.

97 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 20a.

98 N. Beldiceanu, "La conquête": 77.

The Venetian agents' concern for the fate of the Moldavian captives was not coincidental. Many of their dispatches contain references to the fate of Christian captives enslaved in the course of Ottoman raids by sea or on land. On several occasions the *bailo* tried to intervene and to ransom not just Venetian subjects, but other Christians as well, and his actions caught the attention of the Ottoman dignitaries. Thus, when Bembo or Dario complained that the Porte was ignoring the provisions of the peace treaties by refusing to free all imprisoned subjects of the *Serenissima*, the viziers responded that the Venetian agents were using their privileges to free all Christians.⁹⁹

The campaign ended after the division of spoils. We can suppose that the troops were given the order to return in late August and that they reached Adrianople around 20 September.¹⁰⁰ Bembo's and Dario's testimonies broadly confirm this chronology. On 30 August the *bailo* already reported that the Sultan had crossed the Danube, and Dario confirmed that the Sultan was already in Adrianople on 24 September, when he received an ambassador from Ya'qub, ruler of the *Ak koyunlu*.¹⁰¹ Bayezid II had most probably reached his residence only a few days before.

The end of military operations in the summer of 1484 did not end the war as well. For the Porte, the Moldavian problem was still unresolved at the end of November. From his residence in Adrianople, the sultan learned that Stephen had returned to Suceava and was stirring up trouble in the province.¹⁰² Although not detailed, the news referred to Stephen the Great's attempts to reconquer the lost fortresses, or at least one of them. Analysis of Ottoman narrative sources shows that there was an attempt to recapture Akkerman in the summer of 1485.¹⁰³ Pietro Bembo also mentioned the Moldavian prince's efforts in a *dispaccio* of 9 February 1485. The *bailo* reports that on this occasion Stephen's incursion took him "to the gates of Akkerman,"¹⁰⁴ suggesting that the raid took place some months before. The chronicle of Sa'Adeddin provides details regarding this event. The Christians who remained in Akkerman sent a message to the Moldavian prince stating that they would help him take back the city were he to attack it by surprise. However, their plan was discovered

99 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 92–94.

100 Beldiceanu, "La conquête": 83 and 85.

101 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 84.

102 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 174. The editor has wrongly identified Zuzava with Buzău; see Luca, "Observații": 520.

103 Beldiceanu, "La conquête": 85–86.

104 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 20a: "Stefano voivoda esser venuto scorendo fin alle porte de Moncastro".

and thwarted by the Ottomans. The attack took place at night and, much to their surprise, the Moldavians climbing the walls were “welcomed” by the Turks. Many of them were taken prisoners and sent to the sultan in Istanbul, while the Moldavian voivode suffered a staggering defeat.¹⁰⁵

In the same time a Polish emissary was sent to Istanbul to ask the sultan to give back the two cities; however, the diplomatic mission failed, due to the Moldavian prince, who attacked Akkerman. According to the statements of Filippo Buonacorssi-Calimachus made in Venice, when Bayezid II learned about the attack upon the Ottoman garrison of Akkerman he interrupted the peace negotiations and he accused the Poles of perfidy. The presence of the Polish emissary to Istanbul corroborated with the strategy of attacking the city before the Ottomans repair the fortifications lead to conclusion that the attack took place during the winter of 1484–1485.¹⁰⁶ The interval can be narrowed down based on chronological details. On 30 December 1484, the Polish emissary Warsza Michowski received the instructions and list of gifts for the sultan;¹⁰⁷ on 9 February 1485 in Istanbul on knew about the incoming attack of the Moldavian prince. Consequently, we propose the dating of the Akkerman attack in January 1485.

Giovanni Dario's report from the last day of November 1484 also supports this reading, although at first glance it is considerably vaguer. The “trouble” mentioned in the document could refer to the Moldavian prince's military preparations in general, rather than indicate of an attack as such. However, the opposite cannot be ruled out either. The chances of retaking a citadel just after the Ottoman army had withdrawn were favourable, mostly because the fortifications were still partly affected by the siege. In 1463 Matthias Corvinus had recovered forts in Bosnia after Mehmed II's army had left, and in 1470 the Venetians had attempted to retake Negroponte immediately after the departure of the Ottoman fleet. Stephen the Great could have acted similarly in January 1485. If events truly did follow this scenario, another comment in that same dispatch by Giovanni Dario becomes easier to understand, whereby the Turks “would not let that offence (*inzuria*) go unpunished and it will be easy to defeat him, because the two citadels that are so important to him have been reaped.”¹⁰⁸

105 Guboglu and Mehmet, *Cronici turcești*, 1, 328.

106 Ștefan Andreescu, “Ștefan cel Mare la Cetatea Albă”, *Analele Putnei*, VIII (2012), 1: 39–41.

107 Wierzbowski, *Matricularum Regni*, 1, 88.

108 Calò, 22 *Dispacci*, 174: “credo che costoro non patirano quella inzuria et serali cossa fazille a perseguirlo per che li esta tolto quelle do terre che era la vita soa”.

Regardless of whether “*inzuria*” refers to a thwarted attempt on Akkerman or simply Stephen the Great’s refusal to give up the fight, the path to a treaty between Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire was long and tortuous. Giovanni Dario wrote to the Doge Giovanni Mocenigo about this issue on 7 February 1485: “the voyvode Stephen has sent for safe conduct, but has not sent an ambassador. Your Serenity will be informed of whatever may come by my letters.”¹⁰⁹ There is little chance that this information was inaccurate; on the date when the report was sent the Venetian secretary was in Adrianople, along with the Sultan’s court. Generally, news that he sent to Venice was gathered at first hand, rather than based on speculation or rumor. The February report reveals a first stage of Moldavian-Ottoman negotiations which took place shortly after the end of the campaign of 1484. In this phase Stephen the Great negotiated a safe-conduct, the mandatory first step toward any peace treaty with Bayezid II.¹¹⁰

This diplomatic initiative need not indicate resignation about the loss of the fortresses, but rather a preventive measure by the Moldavian prince. Most probably Stephen the Great sought to buy time, hoping for some military support, and sought to sound out his opponent’s intentions. The Ottomans were expecting the Moldavian envoy at the end of February “so that they could then turn their attention to the other matters that were occupying them.”¹¹¹ This is mentioned in the context of a new exchange of envoys between Bayezid and Matthias Corvinus, since a Hungarian-Ottoman peace was considered an essential precondition for any peace between Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire. “I am sure,” Giovanni Dario writes, “that he [the Moldavian envoy] will arrive soon since one [truce] is related to the other, and it is in his [Stephen the Great’s] interest to make an agreement with [the Turks] so as not to fall from bad to worse.”¹¹² The Venetian secretary’s calculations seem to have been correct. The new discussions were apparently the direct result of including Moldavia in a new Hungarian-Ottoman treaty, though with no mention of Kilia or Akkerman. By this formula, Matthias Corvinus took Moldavia under

109 Ibid. 226: “Stefano vaivoda a mandato a tuor el salvo conduto ma ancora non ha manda alchuno ambassador de quel seguira la v<ost>ra Ser<eni>ta per mie lettere sera avixada”.

110 For all the stages of concluding a treaty see Viorel Panaite, “Some Remarks on the Romanian-Ottoman Peace Settlements of the 16th century”, *Transylvanian Review* III (1994), 1: 29.

111 Calo, 22 *Dispacci*, 228: “desidera anche la venuta de lambassador de stefano vaivoda per aquietar le cosse soe de qui per poder attendere pui liberamente a le altre cosse che hano da far”.

112 Ibid., 228–230: “son certo che anche lui vegnera presto perche luna cossa si tira laltra et ad ogni modo e fa anche per lui de prendere qualche condicion cum costoro per non haver mal e pezo”.

his protection but implicitly accepted the new status of the citadels conquered during the 1484 expedition.

The Moldavian embassy arrived at Istanbul in the spring of 1485 and it reflected the belligerent position of the Moldavian prince. Through the voice of his emissary, Stephen the Great accused Bayezid II of having broken his pledge, by breaking without any reason the peace between the Ottoman Empire and Moldavia; hence, he threatened that he would stop paying tribute until the restitution of the two castles. The brave attitude of the voivode was based upon the support of Poland and of the khan of the Great Horde. Consequently, the sultan decided to send back-up troops to Caffa and to repair the fortresses of Kilia and Akkerman. He also began applying his plan of dethroning Stephen the Great by using military action.¹¹³

Pietro Bembo's and Giovanni Dario's testimony ends in February 1485. The last of the *bailo's* dispatches is dated 9th February, while the secretary sent his last report to Venice on the last day of the month. The last document in the file however is dated 31 March 1487 and was sent by Antonio Ferro, Venetian ambassador and later *bailo* in Constantinople from 1486 to 1489.¹¹⁴ This gap of almost two years leaves a number of questions about the Moldavian-Ottoman peace unanswered. Nevertheless, the documents reveal the changes that took place in Ottoman policy after the conquest of Kilia and Akkerman.

Ottoman Threat Ascending

For the Venetians, the expedition into Moldavia was simply the beginning of Sultan Bayezid II's campaigns of conquest. Theodor Spandugino stated that the victory of 1484 caused panic among those Christian powers who feared that the Sultan would wage his wars against them.¹¹⁵ Bembo and Dario supported the view that the "Grand Turk" was preparing a new attack.¹¹⁶ Steps taken after the victory over Stephen the Great clearly indicated a new war: but just as in 1484, no one knew where the Ottoman forces would strike next. The

113 Nagy Pienaru, "Moldova și Imperiul Otoman. Solia lui Ștefan cel Mare din 1485", *Putna. Cătorii ei și lumea lor*, (Bucharest, 2011), 85–93.

114 Maria Pia Pedani, *Elenco degli inviati diplomatici veneziani presso i sovrani ottomani*, (Venice, 2000), 16.

115 Theodor Spandoune, *On the origin of the Ottoman Emperors*, ed. Donald M. Nicol, (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 54.

116 ASV SDC, F. 1A, doc. f 17a of 27 November 1484: "e da creder non habij a star questo anno in otio".

Venetians thought that the conquest of Chios or Rhodes would be an easy matter but it was very hard to make out whether the offensive being prepared in 1485 was aimed at these targets.¹¹⁷ According to Bembo events must unfold as God directed them (*tuto consiste in la desposition divina*), and Venice would have to be ready for whatever came.¹¹⁸ Thus both Bembo and Dario continued to inform the government of their Republic about Ottoman diplomatic contacts and military preparations. The impression given by their reports is that of an empire capable of striking anywhere at any time, with no very coherent strategy underlying these expansionist schemes. According to the Venetian agents, any adversary from the past could fall victim to a new attack. In the new dispensation, Stephen the Great faded into the background for the Venetian agents writing their reports from the Ottoman Empire. The storm seemed to have passed over Moldavia with no sign of where it would turn next. News sent to Venice from Constantinople and Adrianople seemed to point to Egypt as Bayezid's next target. A number of doubts remained, but there was also one certainty: after the expedition of 1484, the Ottoman fleet could only sail for the Mediterranean, for in the Black Sea there was nothing left to conquer (*piu luogo non e rimasto in mar mazor*).¹¹⁹

Indeed, for the Ottomans Kilia and Akkerman's conquest was just a beginning. From a military viewpoint, the conquest of Kilia and Akkerman opened a period of permanent military confrontation in the northern Black Sea particular to the Ottoman borders. Military clashes included raids of the frontier troop, especially of *akinci* troops; they had a destabilising effect on the economy and politics of the neighbouring polities.¹²⁰ In agreement with the *ghaza* ideology, Kilia and Akkerman represent the new frontier of the empire, not in the sense of a demarcation line, but of an area allowing the organization of raids and the Ottoman expansion in the territories of infidels. For this reason, while the sultan failed to obtain a decisive victory against the Moldavian voivode, as his father had attempted before him, Bayezid II believed that the conquest of the cities was a good occasion to assert the *ghazi* prestige of the sultan. After the fall of Akkerman, Bayezid II concluded his campaign and returned to the capital; he stopped in Babadag, near Kilia, a place with important meanings for the *ghaza* ideology. The Ottoman chroniclers mention the sultan's journey from

117 Ibid.: "Molti credeno che landara a Rodi altri dicono a Sio et io tegno facilmente e da uno e da altro".

118 Ibid.

119 ASV, SDC, F.1A, doc. f. 13a of 30 August 1484.

120 Mesur Uyar, Edward G. Erikson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: from Osman to Atatürk*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 57–58.

Akkerman to Adrianople; they state as midpoints Kilia and the tomb of Sari Saltuk Baba.¹²¹

Sari Saltuk was a dervish-warrior who lived in late thirteenth century in Dobrudja. He was very popular for the Balkan Muslims and he was associated with the *ghaza* ideology. The image of the holy warrior was popular among the Rumelia *ghazis*, but it became even more famous after the year 1480 when, upon the request made by prince Djem, the brother of Bayezid II, Ebu'l-Hayr-i Rumi compiled all legends about him in the book titled *Saltukname*.¹²² Some passages suggest that the book is intended to serve as a rapprochement between the Ottoman dynasty and the *gazi* circles. Saltuk prophesied that a sultan named Mehmed will conquer Constantinople and during the siege of Byzantine capital, he appears to Mehmed II in a dream and gives him the keys to the city, but he urges the sultan to keep the keys in Adrianople, “ancient and holy abode of the *ghazis*”.¹²³ A major symbol of the Islamisation, the legendary Sari Saltuk was considered a disciple of Hadjdji Bektash and he was endowed with miraculous powers, defended Muslims and converted unbelievers from China to Andaluzia.¹²⁴ By making a stop to visit Sari Saltuk's tomb, Bayezid stated that he was a *ghazi* sultan; he tried to get closer to *ghazis*, despite being in favour of centralism and of Empire's administration by the palace slaves (*kapu kulu*). This attitude reflects the evolution of Ottoman political ideology from frontier principality to Empire, whose last phase was expressed after the victories of Kilia and Akkerman. It represents the fusion between the laic *ghaza* and religious *ghaza*, expressed by the court histories commissioned in order to glorify the founders of the Ottoman State as *ghazis*, who they never were.¹²⁵ To celebrate the victorious expedition to Moldavia, Bayezid II ordered the construction of a beautiful mausoleum on Sari Saltuk's grave and it became a pilgrimage place.¹²⁶ Later Evliya Celebi noted that Sari Saltuk appeared to Bayezid in his dream: he foretold him that he would conquer Kilia and

121 Guboglu and Mehmet, *Cronici turcești*, I, 132, 327.

122 Zeynep Aydoğan, “Changing Perceptions along the Frontiers. The Moving Frontier with Rum in Late Medieval Anatolian Frontier Narratives”, *Living in the Ottoman Realm. Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th centuries*, eds. Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 32–37.

123 Kafadar, *The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 147–148.

124 G. Leiser, “Sari Saltuk Dede”, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, IX (Brill: Leiden, 1997), 61–62.

125 Kafadar, *The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 96–99.

126 Aurel Decei, *Relații româno-orientale: culegere de studii*, (Bucharest, 1978), 188.

Akkerman, that he would win over Moldavia and that successors would be the rulers of Mecca and Medina.¹²⁷

Before returning to Istanbul, the sultan issued a *fetih-name* announcing this victory against the voyvode Stephen of Moldavia. By proclaiming the conquest of the two strong fortresses, the sultan declared that Akkerman was, because of its position, the key for the victories against the Polish, Bohemians, Russians and Hungarians and a trade centre for the neighbouring regions. The conquest of the fortress was to facilitate new Ottoman triumphs, because “the roads to Poland, Bohemia, Russia and Hungary opened, the advance became easy and the bringing up of supplies could be made with no difficulty whatsoever.”¹²⁸ A short version of this letter, adapted to the Christian rhetorical style, arrived in Ragusa, on 2 October 1484. In his letter the sultan announced that he had conquered a land of the aforementioned Stephen named Kilia which is the key and the gate of the entire realm of Moldavia and Hungary (*una terra del dicto Stephano, chiamata Chielie, la qual è chiave et porta de tutto el paesse de Muldavia et Ongaria*) and another land of the aforementioned voievod named Akkerman which is the key and the gate for the realms of Poland, Russia, Tartary and of all the Black Sea region (*un'altra terra delo dicto Voievoda, chiamata per nome Moncastro, la qual è chiave e la porta el paexe de Polonia, Russia, Tartaria, de tutto el mare maggiore*).¹²⁹

Through Ragusa the news reached the ears of the new pope, elected in the same period in which the sultan besieged the two fortresses, information also confirmed by the Knights of Rhodes and the king of Naples. The situation from Moldavia and the news of the Ottoman fleet's preparations were received with great inquietude in Rome. On 21 November 1484, in an encyclical letter sent to 29 Catholic princes, Innocent VIII showed concern for the Ottomans' recent successes and for the danger of a new Ottoman expedition. The new pope demanded the Christian states send plenipotentiary ambassadors at Rome as soon as possible, in order to discuss the measures which were to be taken with no further delay.¹³⁰ The king of Hungary was not amongst the letter's recipients, the pope addressing him separately, in a letter dispatched in the very same day. The pope demanded the Hungarian king put a swift end to the war with

127 J. Deny, “Sari Saltiq et le nom de la ville Babadag”, *Mélanges offerts à M. Émile Picot*, II (Paris, 1913), 5.

128 Andrei Antalfy, “Două documente din biblioteca Egipteană de la Cairo despre cucerirea Chiliei și Cetății Albe în 1484”, *Revista Istorică*, XX (1934), 1–3: 39–40.

129 Vincentio Makuscev (ed.), *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalem Vicinorumque Populorum*, II, (Belgrad, 1882), 134–135.

130 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 393 and n. 33.

the German emperor and to take arms against the infidels.¹³¹ On 30 November of the same year, in a letter sent to the grand master of the Hospitallers, the pope once again showed his concern for the Ottomans' victory in Moldavia, guaranteeing his full determination in the noble cause of defending Christendom.¹³²

The pope's direct manner of summoning the king of Hungary, Moldavia voevode's suzerain and champion of the crusade in the East, aimed Matthias's military action against the Emperor Frederick and the support granted to the king of Naples, adversary of the new pope, attitudes which provoked an estrangement of Hungary's relations with the Holy See. Innocent VIII cut off the financial aid granted to Hungary for the war against the Turks, an important factor for calling back the papal support being the relationship of King Matthias with Naples.¹³³ The Ottoman attack against Moldavia found the king of Hungary unprepared. In 1483, before setting off the hostilities against the Habsburgs, King Matthias had concluded a five-year armistice with the sultan, but it did not extend to Moldavia. The reports of Pietro Bembo and Giovanni Dario reveal that the king had tried to negotiate the status of the fortresses at Kilia, Akkerman, and, implicitly, the situation of Moldavia as a whole, only after the sultan swore to respect the agreement signed with Hungary.¹³⁴ The instructions sent to the royal emissary were, however, intercepted by the Ottomans and the sultan refused to receive Matthias' envoy, henceforth setting off in the expedition against Moldavia. This decision did not necessarily represent a sign of hostility inasmuch as Mehmed II had acted in a similar manner in 1473, when he left waiting the Hungarian emissary in Amasya while deploying the Ottoman campaign against Uzun Hasan. Under these circumstances, King Matthias could not break the truce with the sultan in 1484 in order to help Moldavia's prince, and his protest had no effect.

131 Vilmos Fraknói (ed.), *Mathiae Corvini Hungariae Regis Epistolae ad Romanos Pontifices*, (Monumenta Vaticana Historiam Regnum Hungariae Illustrantiam, VI, Budapest, 1891), 222–223.

132 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 398–400.

133 Péter E. Kovacs, "Hungary, the Ottomans and the Holy See (1437–1490)", *A Thousand years of Christianity in Hungary. Hungariae Christianae Millennium*, eds. István Zombori, Pál Cséfalvay and Maria Antoaneta de Angelis, (Budapest, 2001), 75–76.

134 Ovidiu Cristea, "Mathias Corvin et l'expédition de Bazeyid II contre la Moldavie (1484)", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XLII (2003), 1–4: 81–88.

Ottoman Pressure and Crusading in Poland

In Poland, the conquest of Kilia and Akkerman caused restlessness, and the pope's calling was received with much more interest. Toward the end of 1484, one can notice an intensification of the diplomatic actions which envisaged different targets. On the one hand, the king of Poland sent an emissary to the Porte and established good relations with the Tartars; on the other hand, he tried to support Moldavia and to obtain papal indulgences.¹³⁵

The Ottoman conquest of the entire northern littoral of the Black Sea and the connections established between Mengli Girey and the Ottoman province of Caffa strengthened the cohesion of the Polish-Lithuanian political system, both sides recognising the fact that they had a mutual interest and showing themselves ready to cooperate in order to defend the south-eastern border regions.¹³⁶ The situation represented a good occasion for Casimir of Poland to assert himself as a "great eastern king" and to strengthen the control over Moldavia and the Teutonic Order.¹³⁷ Until that moment Poland was mostly preoccupied stirring a conflict between the Tartars across Volga and those from Crimea.¹³⁸ Now, King Casimir was willing to become involved in the crusade, blazoning his kingdom as a Christendom *antemurale* against the Ottomans. In his message to the Estates of Prussia, Casimir informed them about the offensive "of the enemy of the Holy Cross and of the Christian faith", who had entered Moldavia and conquered two fortresses, namely Kilia and Akkerman, after they had "crossed over this side of Danube, where never before they had step foot on". As other contemporaries, Casimir considered that the occupation of Akkerman by the Ottomans opened the road to invade Hungary, Poland, Germany and Italy. Further, from the information received from the Moldavian lord, the sultan was to attack Poland in the next summer. The king

135 Theodor Wierzbowski (ed.), *Matricularum Regni Poloniae summaria*, I, (Warsaw, 1905), 88: "Legatio ad imperatorem Tartarorum amicitiae renovandae causa (no. 1709); "Legatio ad dominos per Drzevyczaky et Danielelem in rebus Hungariae, Valachiae, brevis Roma allati et bullae iubilaei" (no. 1722); "Articuli legationis regiae, dati nuntio in Turciam misso" (no. 1728).

136 Krzysztof Baczkowski, *Dzieje Polski późnośredniowiecznej (1370–1506)*, (Krakow, 1999), 246–247; Henryk Lowmiański, *Polityka Jagiellonów*, Poznań, 2006, 274–275.

137 Marian Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy during the Angevin and Jagiellonian Era (1370–1572)", *The History of Polish Diplomacy X–XX c.*, ed. Gerard Labuda and Waldemar Michowicz, (Warsaw, 2005), 121–122.

138 F. Papée, "Imperial Expansion and the Supremacy of the Gentry, 1466–1506", *The Cambridge History of Poland: From the Origins to Sobieski*, edit. W. F. Reddaway, J. H. Penson, O. Halecki and R. Dyboski, (Cambridge University Press, 1950), 253.

showed his willingness to go personally in the campaign against the Turks with the purpose of defending Moldavia's prince, "whose predecessors had always bowed to His Majesty", for "if Moldavia is protected, the Polish Crown is equally protected".¹³⁹ A similar message was sent to the grand master of the Teutonic Order, with a further addition that the king's intention was communicated to the pope, the emperor, the king of Hungary, and other Christian princes, of whom he had asked for help and council for himself and for Christendom.¹⁴⁰

King Casimir's decision to fight against Ottomans had as immediate consequence the replacing of Moldavia under Polish suzerainty. In order to activate the *auxilium* and to overrule any juridical objection from the kingdom's elites, it was necessary for Moldavia to reintegrate in the old *de jure* situation, by performing the corporal homage, which took place in autumn 1485 in Kolomya after intense negotiations.¹⁴¹ On the morning of 12 September, the prince of Moldavia paid the corporal homage on the field near Kolomya. The event made a great impression on the eyewitnesses. Seated on his throne and wearing his coronation robe, King Casimir received the oath of the Moldavian prince who kneeled in front of throne. In that moment, the folds of the tent were pulled aside for all those present to be able to see "the bowing and humiliation of such a great prince", "the most famous prince and warrior of those times."¹⁴² Beyond the moment's greatness, the Moldavian lord's humiliation was only apparent because Stephen had previously negotiated every detail of the ceremony. The prince's banner had not been broken, in compliance with the Polish tradition of paying the homage, but on the contrary Moldavia's ensigns had been deposited in an honored place in the royal treasury.¹⁴³ Symbolically, the usual breaking of the vassal's banner marked his submission, the king henceforth becoming his only source of power. The features of the ritual negotiated by the

139 Karol Górski and Marian Biskup (eds.), *Acta Stanów Prus Królewskich*, I, (Torun, 1955), 288–289.

140 Ibid. 304.

141 Șerban Papacostea, "De la Colomeea la Codrii Cosminului (Poziția internațională a Moldovei la sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea)", *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Portret în istorie*, (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2004), 469.

142 *Scriptores rerum Polonicarum*, II, (Krakow, 1874), 3–4.

143 *Volumina Legum*, I, (St. Petersburg, 1859), 109; Victor Eskenasy, "Omagiul lui Ștefan cel Mare de la Colomeea (1485). Note pe marginea unui ceremonial medieval", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Iași*, XX, (1983): 257–267; also Andrei Pippidi, "Moldavie et Pologne: la fin de la vassalité", *Acta Poloniae Historica* 83 (2001), 59–78 (especially 61–62).

Moldavian prince assert the divine source of his power, inclusively in the act of homage, a fact recognised implicitly by King Casimir himself.¹⁴⁴

The treaties signed after the ceremony focused on two aspects. The first was the recognition of Casimir as unique suzerain of Moldavia: all allegiances contracted previously and the obligation to have no other vassal relations with any other monarch, an allusion which regarded the previous connection between the prince of Moldavia and the king of Hungary, were rejected.¹⁴⁵ The second direction concerned the defense of Moldavia, which included the recovery of the two fortresses lost in the previous year to the Ottomans, the king binding himself not to ask or to conclude peace without consulting Stephen the Great in matters which involved Moldavia and its borders.¹⁴⁶ By taking such a commitment, Casimir indirectly declared war to the sultan. The outbreak of conflict happened soon thereafter.

Moreover, while Stephen the Great was in Kolomya, an Ottoman army commanded by Ali Mihaloglu pasha entered Moldavia to promote a candidate to the throne of Moldavia; they reached all the way to Suceava. Bayezid II entrusted to the *beylerbey* of Rumelia the mission of dethroning Stephen the Great by using military actions. Ottoman chronicles note that Ali Mihaloglu began the “holy war” alongside the Walachian voivode and that their armies entered Moldavia on 5 September 1485. Many Moldavian boyars decided to switch sides and Ali Mihaloglu thus learned that the voivode had fled to Poland. Without having to face any resistance, Ali bey plundered Moldavia and returned to Adrianople full of spoils.¹⁴⁷ The Moldavian chronicles state that Ali Mihaloglu came accompanied by a pretender to Moldavia’s throne, Peter Hronoda, and on 19 September 1485, they arrived to Suceava. Those within the city refused to open the gates, which meant that they did not want to acknowledge the pretender brought by the Turks as their ruler. In reply, the Turks robbed the city of Suceava and left the following day; while they were retreating, they plundered the Moldavian territory.¹⁴⁸ The swiftness of the Ottoman army found Stephen the Great completely unprepared. It was ironic that until 1485 Stephen the Great had refused obstinately to pay homage to the Polish king,

144 In his act, Stephen the Great names himself “*Dei gratia nos Iohannes Stephanus, dominus terre Moldaviensis*”, an entitle also confirmed by the royal document which names him “*magnifico Iohanni Stephano woiewode, Dei gracia domino terre Moldavie* (Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 374 and 376).

145 Papacostea, “*De la Colomeia la Codrii Cosminului*”, 470.

146 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 229–230.

147 Guboglu and Mehmet, *Cronici turcești*, I, 133, 327–328, 463.

148 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 19, 35.

and when he eventually accepted to do it, he was about to lose the throne. But, the rapid retreat of Ali Mihaloglu from Moldavia seems to have been caused by the ongoing events at the northern border of Moldavia. King Casimir had arrived to Kolomya accompanied by 20,000 people, many of whom comprised the heavy cavalry¹⁴⁹ and—alongside the army of the Moldavian prince—they represented a serious threat for Ali bey, who had only troops of light cavalry and several units of the Porte's army (*kapu-kulu*). In conclusion, the mission of Ali Mihaloglu failed, and the sultan chose another way to dethrone Stephen the Great.

The solution was to strengthen the sancak of Silistra and to institute the permanent state of war at the border with Moldavia. In this respect, Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey—a famous commander of *akinci*, sancak-bey of Smederevo since 1478¹⁵⁰—was named sancakbey of Silistra. Sa'Adeddin placed his appointment after the return of Ali Mihaloglu from Moldavia, because of a new attempt by Stephen the Great of taking Kilia and Akkerman back. The sultan left to Bali Bey in charge of administrating the sancak of Silistra and securing the border with Moldavia. He also ordered him to devastate that country using the Rumelia *akinci* and to destroy the Moldavian army.¹⁵¹ After gathering the *ghazi*, Bali Bey started the “holy war,”¹⁵² but the description of the battle—beginning with a defeat and concluding with a victory—shows that the Ottoman chroniclers actually merged several battles into one event. In the autumn of 1485, there may have been several fights on the Moldavian territory, the most important of which was the battle of Katlabug, which unfolded in mid November, won by the Moldavian and Polish armies.¹⁵³ However, the permanent war had already started and, in the spring, the sancakbey of Silistra resumed the attacks.

Although a minor victory, the Polish participation in the battle of Katlabug marked a radical change in the policy of Poland, who had showed virtually no interest in the anti-Ottoman crusade after the failure of Varna (1444). King Casimir had previously been excommunicated twice because of his hostile attitude toward Hungary, an attitude which, in the Holy See's opinion, jeopardised crusading efforts.¹⁵⁴ The political context was nevertheless favourable, so Casimir did not hesitate to change his attitude radically. Oscar

149 Marcin Bielski, *Kronika Polska*, II, (Sanok, 1856), 881.

150 Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conqueror and his time*, trans. Ralph Manheim, (Princeton University Press, 1978), 323.

151 Guboglu and Mehmet, *Cronici turcești*, I, 328.

152 Ibid., 464.

153 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 233–235.

154 Ignaz A. Fessler, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, III, (Leipzig, 1874), 98.

Halecki noticed that, after 1484, given the fact that Hungary was engaged in the conflict with the Habsburgs, Poland could have presented itself as the only bastion of Christendom,¹⁵⁵ although it lacked the necessary military power for such a mission. An Ottoman counteraction was expected after Katlabug, and the news reaching Poland was not encouraging. In December 1485, there were rumors about the sultan's intention to lead a new campaign in Moldavia personally, joined by the two Tartar khans. Poland had to be ready to grant support to his vassal,¹⁵⁶ and was "on the verge of declaring war" (*propter belli proclamationem*)¹⁵⁷ with King Casimir taking steps into that direction.¹⁵⁸

Hungary reacted harshly to King Casimir's reorientation in the favor of the crusade as well as the homage paid by the Moldavian lord to the Polish monarch. In November 1485, in a letter addressed to the Pope, King Matthias expressed his indignation with respect to the homage paid by Stephen the Great at Kolomya. According to Matthias, Casimir had ensnared Moldavia's prince with promises of protection against the Ottomans and the recovery of the two fortresses on the Black Sea Shore. Acting against the treaties and even against

155 Oscar Halecki, "Sixte IV et la Chrétienté orientale", *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, II, (Rome, 1964), 263–264.

156 Karol Górski, Marian Biskup (eds.), *Akta Stanow Prus Krolewskich*, I, (Torun, 1955) 398: "Qui comparens postquam diffuse homagium per Steffanum palatinum Walachie regie mtati factum et Thurcorum prostracionem retulisset, quodque regia mtas esset certissime avisata Turcorum imperatorem adiunctis sibi Tartarorum duobus utpote Ordensi et Transvolhensi imperatoribus, quibus foret confederatus, pro futura estate in persona propria Walachiam intraturum maximis potenciis, petivit itaque nomine regio, ut ad resistendum Thurcis et (ut verbis suis lacioribus utar) aliis Regni Polonie inimicis ad obvian(dum) denique calamitati future tocius fidei orthodoxe, cuius gratia multa persuasit, dignarentur regie mtati subvenire ac se constitutus in Regno equiparare auxilio parando, instans tandem pro celeri sibi dando responso".

157 Fryderyk Papée, *Polska i Litwa na przełomie wieków średnich*, I, (Krakow, 1904), 196.

158 Anno proximo praeterito his diebus, videlicet prope festum Viti (15 june) ante aut post, Turcarum imperatore terram Valachiae ingrediente, posteaque diebus proximis eadem invasione castrum Byalograd et Kylio in vigilia S. Margarethae (12 july) expugnat et recipiente, serenissimus dominus Casimirus, rex Poloniae, ad veniendum in regnum revocatus, huic tempestati Turci consulturus, publicitus feliciteraque rediens, ut in majori registro signatum est, restibus secundis in vim primarum et tertiis pro ultimis praemissis, pro festo S. Iacobi (25 july) diem congregiendi subditis suis polonis, pruthenis Magistro et Russiae praefixit singulis terris, locis ut infra at constituendum assignatis, cuius consignationes ordo, restiumque praemissarum in missione consuetudo ad terrarum conventionem, quae videlicet, cum quibus iturae sunt denique civitates pro missione terrarum avisatae infrascriptis sunt anno Domini 1485 (Wierzbowski, *Matricularum Regni*, I, 93, no. 1812).

the political ties which bound Stephen the Great and his predecessors to the kingdom of Hungary, Casimir deterred Stephen from the obedience owed to the king of Hungary. Furthermore, King Matthias argued, Casimir had no means to defend Moldavia; he had already tried to recover the Moldavian fortresses with diplomatic action, which eventually ended in a new attack against Moldavia.¹⁵⁹ The same accusations, but much more detailed, also feature in the letter sent by Matthias to the archbishop Berthold Hennenberg, chancellor of the Holy Empire. In the opinion of the Hungarian king, Poland did nothing more than to aggravate Moldavia's situation, assuming commitments which it could not honor.¹⁶⁰

The Hungarian king depicted the Polish monarch not only as a usurper of his rights, but described him as incapable of ensuring Moldavia's protection against the Ottoman attacks and least of all to recover the two fortresses. In the letter to the Pope, the king of Hungary complained against the Holy See's policy that encouraged the enemies of his realm as a revenge for Matthias' support for king Ferdinand of Naples. On 7 June 1486, Innocent VIII replied that the Holy See did not resent the kingdom of Hungary for the war against Ferdinand, which bore no effect upon the relations between the Holy See and Hungary. The pope promised to examine Matthias' concerns.¹⁶¹

While he advocated that the fight against the Ottomans was an obligation for all Christian princes, King Matthias was more concerned by the loss of his vassal. Matthias held the opinion that the homage of Kolomya, made the king of Poland the only responsible for defending Moldavia. A similar position was also expressed by Ivan III of Muscovy, a relative of the Moldavian prince. In 1483, the alliance between Moldavia and Muscovy had been sealed by the marriage of Elena Stephanovna with Ivan the Younger,¹⁶² the presumptive heir to the Muscovite throne and associated to the throne. Although he was in conflict with Muscovy's ruler, King Casimir speculated his new suzerainty over Stephen the Great to request Ivan III to join the defense of Moldavia against the Ottoman threat. Ivan III answered in June 1486 by sending an embassy

159 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 40–41.

160 Vilmos Fraknói (ed.), *Mátyás király levelei*, II, (Budapest, 1895), 298: "Sed ubi iam sunt Poloni? ubi tanto verborum flumine promissum subsidium? ubi data fides eorum? reverendissima dominatio vestra accipiat. Dum turpiter bellum cum Polonis in Moldavia cepit, dum agros inpune vastat et predia cuncta populat, Poloni interea in oris semper Moldaviae intenti, nec se quoque movent".

161 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/2, 291–293; Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, trans. D. H. Leclercq, VII/1, (Paris, 1917), 118.

162 А. Л. Хорошкевич, *Русское государство в системе международных отношений конца XV- начала XVIв.*, (Moscow, 1980), 89–91.

led by Feodor Mansurov. Arguing that the great distance prevented him from fighting for Christendom, the prince of Muscovy reminded Casimir IV that he was responsible for protecting Moldavia on account of the homage paid by Stephen the Great. The Russian prince further reckoned that all neighbouring Christian kings had the same obligation toward Moldavia and her prince.¹⁶³ Although Ivan III, in his reply, did not reject outright an alliance between the Catholic and Greek-Orthodox princes, he hinted at his discontent for the political bounds established between Poland and Moldavia.

Other attempts made by Poland to attract support against the Ottomans were aimed at the Holy Empire and Venice. At the beginning of 1486, Philippus Callimachus and Rafal Jaroslowski were dispatched to discuss the Ottoman threat with the Habsburgs and to propose a matrimonial alliance to King Maximilian.¹⁶⁴ In Venice, the speech delivered by Callimachus recounted the events from the previous years in a discourse very similar to the one of King Matthias with one huge difference: shifting the responsibility for the Ottoman success. Callimachus argued that after the conquest of Kilia and Akkerman by the Ottomans, the Polish king had prepared a large army to recover the two fortresses. He had also sent an emissary to the sultan to demand their peaceful return, while remanding him that he was prepared to take them back by force if need be. Callimachus also stated that the lord of Moldavia did not wait for the return of the Polish emissary but decided to attack Akkerman, unsuccessfully. This move had upset the sultan, discontent that the Polish king was not able to control his vassal.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, the Polish emissary turned to Venice to mediate a peace with the sultan, through the agency of Giovanni Dario, Venice's secretary at Constantinople.¹⁶⁶

163 В. А. Улианицки (ed.), *Материалы для взаимныхъ отношеній Россіи, Польни, Молдавіи, Валахіи и Турци* (Moscow, 1887), 115–116.

164 Janusz Smolucha, *Papiestwo a Polska w latach 1484–1526*, (Krakow, 1999), 36.

165 August Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónow z archiwów weneckich. Cześć III", *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk Poznańskiego*, XIX, (1892), 63: "Sedate queste intestine discordie el re preparo gran numero de zente per recuperare quelli Castelli, et intermi mando uno suo orator al Turco a dimandar la restitutione de quelli et tractar de pace, et per l'una, o l'altra via era disposto ricuperar li Castelli predicti. In questo mezo Stephano Vayvoda desideroso de haver el suo, non expectata la operatione del oratore, ne li preparamenti regii, assalto cum alcune zente Monchastro, dove ussiti i Turchi erano ala custodia de quello seguite che da poy una strage da luna parte cossa intesa per el Turco licentio l'orator, et rupe la practica dela pace, cum dir che lera deluso dal re, per che monstrava voler pace, et faceva el loro vassalo molestar isuo luogi et cussi fu dissolta la practica".

166 Ibid. 64–66; Jozsef Garbacik, *Kallimach jako dyplomata i polityk*, (Krakow, 1948), 92–102.

Whilst Callimachus was waiting at Venice for an answer from the Ottoman capital, another Polish emissary was reaching Rome. On 26 May 1486, Jan Targowski, elected bishop of Premyszl, was received by the Pope and consecrated as bishop.¹⁶⁷ Apart from the official formalities, Jan Targowski informed Rome about King Casimir's intention to become involved in the fight against the Ottomans.¹⁶⁸ In his message the emissary insisted on the support that Poland granted in the battle against the infidels in the days of Emperor Sigismund, in the times of King Wladislas and John of Capistrano and even of King Matthias when several thousand Poles came to the aid of the kingdom of Hungary after Marino de Frageno preached the crusade in Poland.¹⁶⁹ The king expressed his concern about the hard situation of Moldavia and the necessity of an action in that direction. The Ottoman conquest of Kilia and Akkerman had opened a dangerous way towards the kingdom of Poland and other Christian kingdoms. In the previous year, 80,000 Turks had invaded Moldavia and the king was forced to send his sons, Albert and Alexander, to repel the invaders.¹⁷⁰

The Moldavian question represented the central point of Poland's demand to the Holy See, but at that time the pope avoided moderating the dispute between the kings of Poland and Hungary on this matter.¹⁷¹ Moldavia's situation was critical because of the Ottoman raids and of the attempt to replace

167 Johannis Burchardi, *Diarium Inocentii VIII, Alexandri VI, Pii III, et Julii II. Tempora complectens*. (Firenze, 1855), 77.

168 Jerzy Zathej, "Zapomniane polonicum drukowane w Rzymie w r. 1486 (Jana Targowskiego lacinska mowa do papieza Innocentego VIII)", *Medievalia. W 50 rocznice pracy naukowej Jana Dabrowskiego*, (Warsawa, 1960), 308.

169 Ibid. 31.

170 Nam Turcus unitus cum Tartaris ante annum preteritum, valida qualem nunquam ante hac habuit congregata potencia, Moldaviam intravit, prefectum illius Serenissimi nostri regis subditum vi oppressit. Castra et oppida illius potiora Lycostonium et Albumcastrum possedit. Per quorum adeptionem portam sibi diutius clausam primum in oras regni nostri, tandem in alia cristianorum dominia aperuit. Anno tandem preterito ultra quam octuaginta milia hominum Moldaviam vastaturam immisit. Qui per illustrimos principes Albertum et Alexandrum Serenissimi regis nostri natos usque post Danubium pulsi sunt. Quod Turcus amare ferens rursus exercitum fortem in Moldaviam misit, ignominiam sibi illuc illatam vindicaturus. Qui tandem deo propitio per gentes Serenissimi regis nostri ibidem locates et prefectum Moldavie victi sunt, interfecti plures, pauci fugere evasere presidio. Hec propterea dicere volui ne Sanctitas tua moleste ferat, quod Rex noster tot cricumventus actionibus serius quam debuit ad illius conspectum miserit. Nil tamen neglexit quippe quod Serenissimus Rex noster Polonie, quod non tam verbis, quam factis sanctam sedem apostolicam colit, veratur et observat (Zathej, "Zapomniane polonicum", 312).

171 Krzysztof Baczkowski, "Panstwa Europy srodkowo-wschodniej wobec antytyreckich projectow Innocentego VIII (1484–1492)", *Nasza Przeslosc*, 74 (1990): 215.

Stephen the Great with a prince who was favourable to the sultan. In February 1486, the Ottoman army led by Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey and Ali Mihaloglu entered Moldavia, bringing again Peter Hronoda as a candidate for Moldavian throne. On 6 March 1486 at Şcheia a dramatic and inconclusive battle unfolded. During the course of the battle, Stephen the Great fell from his horse and remained among the dead from morning until dusk. Before the candidate brought by the Ottomans could proclaim himself lord of Moldavia, a spectacular change in circumstances took place. One of Stephen the Great's faithful servants looked for him on the battlefield and found him alive. Another servant lured Peter with reassurances about his victory, then cut off his head. This incident produced a radical change in Stephen's attitude, making him a lot more prudent and more preoccupied to earn divine grace through pious deeds.¹⁷² His interest for the crusade and recovering Kilia and Akkerman remained as great as ever, despite the decision to initiate peace negotiations with the sultan.

In response to the request of the Polish emissaries, Innocent VIII published on 5 July 1486 the bull of the crusade *Catholice fidei defensionem*, by which he granted a plenary indulgence to all who joined King Casimir against the Turks and the Tartars, who threatened the kingdom of Poland and the neighbouring countries. With the spiritual reward, the document mentioned pecuniary clauses and obligations for the clergy, all of these in order to ensure the most efficient mobilization of clerks and layman alike.¹⁷³ A few days later, the pope extended the privilege granted to the king of Poland, offering him the right to hold three quarters of the income owed to the Apostolic Camera for the benefit of the crusade.¹⁷⁴ Unfortunately, the pope's efforts to gather the Christian princes in a coalition failed. The Knights of Rhodes had a non-aggression pact with the sultan, while discussions with Frederick III and Maximilian obtained only their formal agreement concerning the crusade.¹⁷⁵ The king of Poland appeared to be the only one determined to fight against the Turks, which would explain the pope's generosity toward him.

A Failed Crusade Expedition

Against this background of diplomatic negotiations and military scrutiny, in 1486, Pskov received the news that the lord of Moldavia, with the aid of the Polish-Lithuanian armies, reconquered Kilia and Akkerman and crossed

¹⁷² Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 36; Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 236–237.

¹⁷³ A. Theiner (ed), *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, II, (Rome, 1861), 234–240.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 240.

¹⁷⁵ Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 401–403.

the Danube headed toward Constantinople.¹⁷⁶ The reality was completely different, and the road to Constantinople was in fact travelled by emissaries sent to ask the sultan for peace. On 5 September 1486, Callimachus received a negative answer from Venice in the issue of mediating the peace with the sultan. The mission had failed because the Venitian secretary at the Porte had just left Constantinople.¹⁷⁷ Other ambassadors were more successful. In 1486, the Hungarian embassy obtained a renewal of the truce, while the Moldavian emissary received the conclusion of the peace with the sultan. It is also true that the renewal of the Hungarian-Ottoman agreement was not safe from risk: the Hungarian emissary Dimitrie Jaksić was assassinated on 6 November 1486, on his return to Buda. The incident did not go unnoticed, as shortly afterwards a Hungarian incursion into Ottoman territory occurred, but the diplomatic intervention of sultan Bayezid, as well as king Mathias's other political interests avoided a large-scale conflict.¹⁷⁸ The preparations for the war against Egypt compelled Bayezid II to soften relations with the European enemies, a fact which favored the peace negotiations. In this respect, an Ottoman chronicle made a connection between the conclusion of the peace with Moldavia and the preparations for the expedition against the "country of Arabia" led by Davud pasha.¹⁷⁹ After the expedition of Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey, the voivode of Moldavia became once again tributary of the sultan in the spring,¹⁸⁰ or the autumn of 1486 at the latest.¹⁸¹

The conclusion of the peace with the sultan provided the Moldavian ruler the necessary respite to rebuild his forces; the fight for reconquering his lost fortresses was never abandoned. At the end of 1486, his emissaries went to the Diet of Piotrkow,¹⁸² where the Polish king and the kingdom's assembly

176 A. H. Насонов (ed.), *Псковские Летописи*, II, (Moscow, 1955), 67.

177 Cieszkowski, "Materiały do historyi Jagiellónow III": 66–67.

178 Ivan Biliarsky, "Une page des relations magyaro-ottomanes vers la fin du XV^e siècle", *Turcica*, 32 (2000): 291–305.

179 Mehmet and Guboglu, *Cronici turcești*, I, 187.

180 Tahsin Gemil, "Quelques observations concernant la conclusion de la paix entre la Moldavie et l'Empire Ottoman (1486) et la délimitation de leur frontière", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXII (1983), 3: 225–238; Nagy Pienaru, "Tratatul de pace moldo-otoman (1486)", *Național și universal în istoria românilor. Studii oferite prof. dr. Șerban Papacostea cu ocazia împlinirii a 70 de ani*, ed. Ovidiu Cristea and Gheorghe Lazăr, (Bucharest, 1998), 300–302.

181 N. Beldiceanu, "La Moldavie Ottomane à la fin du XV^e siècle et au début du XVI^e siècle", *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, XXVII (1969), 2: 244–245; Ștefan S. Gorovei, "La paix moldo-ottomane de 1486 (Quelques observations en marge des textes)", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, XXI (1982), 3–4: 405–421.

182 Iorga, *Chilia și Cetatea Albă*, 284.

discussed the details of the future campaign against the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸³ The chronicler Kaspar Weinreich recorded that the king appointed his son, Jan Olbracht, to lead the expedition against the Turks and the Tartars which was to take place in Moldavia.¹⁸⁴ The information is confirmed by an act issued by King Casimir on 19 March 1487: it was an order addressed to the officials of Gdansk, demanding them to pay 60 florins to the physician Johann Liberhant, needed by his son, Jan Olbracht, in order to go to Moldavia.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, at that date, the preparations for expedition were still unfolding.

In June, the crusading expedition reached Lwow,¹⁸⁶ approaching Moldavia's borders. After leaving Lwow, Jan Olbracht decided to change the initial plan and the direction of attack. Instead of continuing the advance southward, the Polish army headed east against the Tartars. At the beginning of September, the Poles defeated them in the battle of Kopystrzyn in Podolia. The victory was described by the chronicler as an important and categorical success: the losses of the Tartars reached four thousand, while the Polish barely lost fifty men. The leaders of the Tartars were executed on the battlefield.¹⁸⁷ Jan Olbracht's action generated confusion, insomuch that some remembered it as a victory against the Ottomans.¹⁸⁸ On 15 September 1487, the royal emissary at the Diet of the Prussian States, who had come to ask for financial aid for the war against the Ottomans, continued to plead the cause of Moldavia and of the two fortress held by the Turks.¹⁸⁹ The true losers of the battle of Kopystrzyn were identified with certainty only afterwards. On 30 September, in a letter addressed to the Gdansk officials, bishop Peter of Wroclaw considered that the victory won by Jan Olbracht against the infidels was important not only for the Polish, but for all of the Christendom.¹⁹⁰ In reality, the Polish victory was not a decisive one. Despite the defeat suffered at Kopystrzyn, new hordes of Tartar continued to appear, and for the next three years Jan Olbracht was forced to dedicate himself to defending the realm against their attacks. Only after the conclusion of

183 Górski and Biskup, *Akta Stanow Prus*, I, 425; Papée, *Polska i Litwa*, 209.

184 Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen and Ernst Strehle (eds.), *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, IV, (Leipzig, 1870), 766: "Item so reidede auch der her konig stark in die Walachei gegen die Turken und machte seinen son, den hertzog Hans Albrecht zu einem heergrefen und sante im vil volks mitte in die Walachey gegen die Turken und Tatern".

185 A. Pawinski (ed.), *Liber quitantiarum regis Casimiri ab a. 1484 ad 1488* (Warsaw, 1897), 142.

186 Iorga, *Chilia și Cetatea Albă*, 284.

187 Martin Kromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum*, (Basel, 1555), 637; Marcin Bielski, *Kronika Polska*, II, (Sanok, 1856), 882–883.

188 *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, IV, 767–768.

189 Górski and Biskup, *Akta Stanow Prus*, I, 465–466.

190 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 341.

the peace with the Ottoman Empire, the Polish-Lithuanian forces won the decisive victory against the Tartars from across the Volga, in the battle of Zaslaw (January 1491).¹⁹¹

The delaying of an open confrontation with the Ottoman Empire determined increased feelings of uncertainty. Expenses caused by the extended maintenance of a numerous army were high, as a letter of the royal secretary Nicholas Kościeleski to the bishop of Warmia reveals.¹⁹² The arrival of the Ottoman emissary with the sultan's offer for peace ended the military preparation that had burdened the kingdom of Poland since the fall of Kilia and Akkerman. On 7 May 1487, the sultan's envoy arrived at the Diet from Piotrkow, accompanied by 40 men. Present were also emissaries from Moldavia, Hungary, and Bohemia.¹⁹³ The States of Poland debated the opportunity to conclude peace with the sultan and eventually informed the king about the realm's unwillingness to confront the Ottoman Empire. Questioned about the same issue, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order avoided a categorical answer, but appreciated that "peace is always welcomed by all of Christendom, for because of it there is prosperity, and by war especially with the infidels, such prosperity is destroyed." An interesting detail is the fact that the sultan had previously announced his intention to send an embassy to Poland.¹⁹⁴ The accreditation letter of the Ottoman emissary bears the date of 10 January,¹⁹⁵ which indicates that the preliminary discussions were conducted in 1487, a reality which might explain the change in the target of Jan Olbracht's expedition. An attack against Akkerman would have compromised any peace negotiations between Poland and the Ottoman Empire. Finally, Nicholas Firlej of Dambrowica was sent to the Porte to conclude a two-year peace. In March 1489, Bayezid II issued an *ahd-name*, and the armistice was subsequently confirmed by King Casimir in the presence of the Ottoman envoy.¹⁹⁶ In his instructions, Firlej had to demand

191 Papée, "Imperial Expansion", 254.

192 "Ubi vestra reverenda paternitas audiet et cetus consiliariorum legacionem regie maiestatis et indiligentiam tocius corone et christianitatis; et presertim cum ad presens nec sumptus nec thesauri sufficiunt, sed auxiliis indiget contra hostes, hos fortes imperatores Tartharorum, videlicet Zawolszki et Przekopszky, qui ista hieme in Podolia depascunt, prestolantes estatem adventum imperatoris Turcorum, cum quo compactati, uti r(egia) m(aiestas) certificata est, dominia sue maiestatis pro estate invasuri et devastaturi" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 346–347).

193 *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, IV, 768.

194 Górski and Biskup, *Akta Stanow Prus*, I, 504.

195 *Ibid.* 499.

196 Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Relations (15th–18th centuries)*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2000), 110.

the restitution of Kilia and Akkerman and even to offer an amount of money to the sultan, but this topic was completely omitted in the text of the peace treaty, where only the free circulation of the Polish merchants in the Ottoman Empire was granted.¹⁹⁷

The crusade of the Polish king against the Turks ended without producing any remarkable results in comparison with the objectives of the Holy See, but Innocent VIII granted new indulgences favoring the king of Poland and the expedition against the Ottomans in 1488.¹⁹⁸ The pope had more plans for the king of Poland; in 1488 he sent bishop Simon of Reval as apostolic legate in order to prepare the crusade against the “Ruthenians and the schismatics” from the borders of the kingdom.¹⁹⁹ Bishop Simon had instructions to create a league consisting of Denmark, the Teutonic Knights and Poland, with the purpose of undertaking crusades against Muscovite Russia.²⁰⁰

The failure of the crusade and the conclusion of the Polish-Ottoman peace displeased the prince of Moldavia. The homage of Kolomyia included a pledge from King Casimir not to conclude any peace without Stephen’s consent and to re-establish Moldavia’s previous boundaries. Although he signed the peace with the sultan, Stephen the Great prepared to join the expedition led by Jan Olbracht. For the interval 8 March-7 October 1487, there are no documents issued by the Moldavian chancellery,²⁰¹ which is a particular trait for the periods in which military campaigns were underway. This means that the prince waited for the royal army to head towards Kilia and Akkerman, as it had been established in the treaty of 1485. In the new context, the Moldavian-Polish relations evolved from vassalage to hostility. In 1488, Stephen charged Mucha, a Ruthenian refugee to Moldavia, to start an insurrection in the southern part of the kingdom of Poland.²⁰² In December 1488, King Casimir sent an emissary in Moldavia to discuss the incidents on the Moldavian-Polish frontier and the prince’s claims to Pokutya.²⁰³

197 A. Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti II*, (Krakow, 1891), 292–293.

198 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 345–346.

199 Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, II, 243–244.

200 Janus Moller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades, 1400–1650*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007), 137.

201 Liviu Pilat, “Itinerariile lui Ștefan cel Mare”, *Ștefan cel Mare și Sfânt. Atlet al credinței creștine*, (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2004), 493.

202 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 36.

203 “Instrumentum legationis ad palatinum Valachiae in causa invasionis et rapinarum ab officialibus palatini in dominio regni Poloniae, praecipue vero in terra Pocuczye patratum” (Wierzbowski, *Matricularum Regni*, I, 102, no. 1957).

The decisive moment of the break between the two monarchs was Stephen's annullment of the homage paid in Kolomya. The chronicler Kaspar Weinreich mentioned the return of the Moldavian prince under Hungarian protection, because the Polish king did not help him against the Turks and the Tartars as he had promised, and only after the pope had absolved him from the oath he made to the Polish king did he pay homage to the king of Hungary.²⁰⁴ Later, another German chronicler, Liborius Naker, registered a succession of events, which he had heard from an old Ruthenian nobleman. According to his testimony the Polish-Moldavian relations became more and more tense following a failed common attempt of an anti-Ottoman expedition and after Mucha's rebellion. In the end, Stephen claimed in front of the bishop of Premyż that he was compelled to pay tribute to the sultan as King Cazimir neglected his obligations.²⁰⁵

Innocent VIII's decision to cancel the vassalage contract followed the request of King Matthias, made in 1485, and that of the prince of Moldavia, most likely formulated in 1488. On 26 June 1489, King Casimir complained to the pope about the injustice done to him by taking the Moldavian prince from under his obedience while his kingdom was threatened by Tartars. Furthermore, the king expressed his concern about the intentions of the great prince of Muscovy to take the crown and the title of king of Russia and warned him not to commit such a mistake. Casimir declared that he continued to be faithful to the cause of defending Christendom against the Turks, informing the pope that he would send dispatches to Rome to discuss with the emissaries of the other Christian princes about organizing the crusade. In order to be helped in the fight against infidels, the king requests, at the end of the letter, that his son be invested bishop of Warmia.²⁰⁶ The pope's answer to the demands of the Polish king indicates a decline of Poland's relation with the Holy See. The Pope sanctioned the new Hungarian-Moldavian relations²⁰⁷ and rejected Frederick Jagiello's candidacy to be appointed bishop of Warmia.²⁰⁸ These actions must be seen within the pope's efforts toward peace, preoccupied as he was to conclude a general peace among the Christian princes, with the purpose of organizing a crusade against the Turks.

204 *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum*, IV, 778–779.

205 *Ibid.* v, (Leipzig, 1874), 306–307.

206 Cieszkowski, "Materyaly do historyi Jagiellónow III", 71–72.

207 Ilona Czamanska, *Moldawia i Wołoszczyzna wobec Polski, Węgier i Turcji w XIV i XV wieku*, (Poznan, 1996), 158–166.

208 The pope appointed instead Luca Watzelrode see Karol Górski, *Lukasz Watzenrode życie i działalność polityczna (1447–1512)*, (Wrocław-Warsaw-Gdańsk, 1973), 17–22.

The Eastern Border and the Congress of Rome

The expectations from this congress were very high in connection with the alliance of Christian princes and with installing of Djem, Bayezid's brother, on the throne of the sultans. It seems that the Ottoman prince had promised, in case he could obtain the throne, to withdraw the Ottomans from Europe and even to return Constantinople, a promise which encouraged the king of Poland to accept the pope's invitation.²⁰⁹ Djem's transfer to Rome in 1489 under the Pope's custody was considered by Bayezid II as the beginning of the crusade and the sultan threatened the Hospitallers with reprisals.²¹⁰

The pope's call was favourably received by Hungary and Poland. King Matthias sent to Rome the bishop of Vezprem, John Vitéz,²¹¹ and, in Poland, Philippus Buonacorsi Callimachus wrote an ample memorandum, *Ad Innocentium VIII de bello Turcis inferendo oratio*. Callimachus did not participate at the congress.²¹² His missive reached Rome via the emissary Jan Brandys, who also had the mission to request the dignity of cardinal for the king's son, Frederick.²¹³ In his discourse, Callimachus presented a future crusade from the perspective of the kingdom of Poland's interests and of the particularities of the Eastern border of Christendom, which he knew from personal experience, including aspects concerning the Ottoman society and military organization. In the historical exposition, Callimachus mentioned the battles against the Turks led by Vlad the Impaler and Stephen, and the loss of Kilia and Akkerman, but, in his opinion, the Moldavians concluded peace not as defeated, but as victorious. The author did not fail to speak about King Casimir's greatness and Jan Olbracht's bravery against the Tartars, nor to praise Prince Frederick's moral qualities, who would deserve the cardinal office. The author of the text claims that the Kingdom of Poland should be granted a higher priority in the crusade plans and a consistent financial support. His main arguments were the king's determination to fight against the Turks, the territorial size of the kingdom, the large number of inhabitants, and the favourable geographic position which

209 Pastor, *History of the Popes*, v, 304–305.

210 Halil Inalcik, "A Case Study in Renaissance Diplomacy: the Agreement between Innocent VIII and Bayezid II on Djem Sultan", *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional?* ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 69–72.

211 Fraknói, *Mátyás király levelei*, II, 361.

212 Garbacik, *Kallimach*, 117.

213 Baczkowski, "Panstwa Europy", 229–232.

allowed the Polish army to head directly to the mouth of the Danube, then toward Adrianople and Constantinople.²¹⁴

Pope Innocent VIII's dream nearly came true. The participants at the congress pleaded for the necessity of organizing a general crusade against the Turks, which would include three Christian armies: a powerful fleet and two land armies. The expedition was to be synchronised with the confrontation between Ottomans and the sultan of Egypt. The army of the "German nations," to which Hungary and Poland joined, was to leave Vienna under the command of the Holy Roman Emperor or of the Roman king and to march on through Hungary and Wallachia.²¹⁵ But, the ambitious plan of a common crusade was cancelled before the discussions ended. The death of King Mathias, which occurred on 9 April 1490, marked the beginning of the struggle for Saint Stephen's crown between the Jagiellonian and Habsburg dynasties. Soon both camps were joined by other rulers in the region, thus the dispute engaged a large part of Central and Eastern Europe.²¹⁶ The Jagiellons started as favorites in this confrontation, because they held the crowns of Poland and Bohemia and, in addition, Wladislas, king of Bohemia, was supported by the Hungarian nobles and by Queen Beatrice, Mathias's widow, whom he promised to marry. The situation changed when another Jagiellonian, Jan Olbracht, entered the competition for the crown of Hungary, trying to obtain the support of the Moldavia and Muscovy. To that effect, Callimachus asked the prince of Moldavia for military and financial support, offering help against the Ottomans in exchange,²¹⁷ for the recovery of Kilia and Akkerman.

Coalition against Jagiellons

A Jagiellonian on the throne of Buda was not a fortunate option for Moldavia and Muscovy, which is why the two realms chose the Habsburg camp. In July

214 F. Kallimach, *Ad Innocentium VIII de bello Turcis inferendo oratio*, ed. I. Lichońska and T. Kowalewski, (Warsaw, 1964).

215 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 415–416; Pastor, *History of the Popes*, v, 307–308.

216 Krzysztof Baczkowski, *Walka o Węgry w latach 1490–1492. Z dziejów rywalizacji habsbursko-jagiellońskiej w basenie środkowego Dunaju*, (Krakow, 1995); Alexandru Simon, "Crusading at the time of the Hungarian Royal Elections of 1490. Between Matthias Corvinus' Succession and John Albert's Moldavian Campaign", in *Between Worlds. The Age of the Jagiellonians*, ed. by Florin Ardelean, Christopher Nicholson and Johannes Preiser-Kapeller (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 195–214.

217 Jozef Garbacik (ed.), *Materiały do dziejów dyplomacji polskiej z lat 1486–1516*, (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow, 1966), 12–14.

1490, the basis for an alliance treaty was set according to which great prince promised to support Maximilian in obtaining the crown of Hungary while Maximilian was to support the Muscovy's plans to occupy the duchy of Kiev.²¹⁸ The treaty was to be ratified by the two sovereigns and enforced by the marriage of Maximilian with the great prince's daughter, on the condition that the bride could preserve her Greek-Orthodox faith. Thus, the political alliance was supposed to be strengthened by a matrimonial one, as in the case of the relation between Muscovy and Stephen the Great.²¹⁹ The prince of Moldavia, when asked by Maximilian to state his position regarding his candidacy to the throne of Hungary, recognised the Roman king as "his natural prince and suzerain."²²⁰ Consequently, the conflicts at the Moldavian-Polish border increased, timed with similar actions undertaken by the duke of Moscovy and Mengli Girey's Tartars.²²¹

In August 1490, Maximilian occupied Vienna and in the same month he addressed the Estates of Transylvania, using his status of king of Hungary, demanding them to swear allegiance through the prince, Stephen of Moldavia.²²² The climax was reached in November 1490, when Maximilian's troops entered Buda, but the revolt of his troops turned the balance in favor of the Jagiellonian camp. In spring 1491, Maximilian was preoccupied to secure the necessary financial resources and to expand the anti-Jagiellonian alliance by appealing the Teutonic Order and Sweden. As the great prince of Muscovy openly manifested his intention to attack Poland, Maximilian hurried to ratify the alliance treaty in the form suggested by Ivan III, in June 1491.²²³ While the king's emissary, George von Thorn, was heading toward Moscow, an event compromised the purpose of his mission. Constrained by the financial difficulties and by the troubles in Bretagne, Maximilian accepted to conclude a peace treaty with Wladislas, in Bratislava (7 November 1491), in which he recognised Wladislas as king of Hungary. Wladislas, in turn, recognised the hereditary right of the Habsburgs to the crown of Hungary and promised to pay war reparations of 100,000 golden florins.

218 Krzysztof Bojko, "Początki stosunków dyplomatycznych Wielkiego Księstwa Moskiewskiego z Rzeszą Niemiecką (1486–1493)", *Studia Historyczne*, 2 (149), 1995: 155.

219 Gustave Alef, "The adoption of the Muscovite two-headed eagle: a discordant view", *Speculum*, 41, 1966, 1: 5–7.

220 Ștefana Simionescu-Dăscălescu, "Știri noi despre relațiile dintre Ștefan cel Mare și Maximilian I de Habsburg", *Revista de istorie*, 33 (1980), 10: 1984.

221 Papée, *Polska i Litwa*, 214–216.

222 I. Minea, "Ștefan cel Mare și împăratul Maximilian I", *Cercetări istorice*, V–VII (1929–1931): 354–355.

223 John Fenell, *Ivan the Great of Moscow* (London, 1961), 127–128.

King Maximilian's unexpected exit from the competition surprised his allies. The prince of Moldavia was the first to act, recognizing Wladislas Jagiello as legitimate suzerain, in accordance with the stipulations of the peace of Bratislava. At the beginning of 1492, Wladislas Jagiello confirmed to Stephen the Great his Transylvanian possessions, previously granted to him by King Mathias.²²⁴ In February 1492, an emissary of the Moldavian lord arrived in Muscovy,²²⁵ warning Ivan III about the evolution of the events in Hungary. In the following year, the great prince used the message brought by the Moldavian emissary to reproach Maximilian his hastened exit from Hungary and the armistice with "King Casimir and his children."²²⁶ The possibility of reopening the conflict for the crown of Saint Stephen between the Habsburgs and the Jagiellonians represented an important stake in the first part of 1492, but lost its appeal in the second part of the year, due to the turn of events. First of all, Jan Olbracht's attack against king Wladislas produced a breach in the Jagiellonian dynasty, which did not go unnoticed by contemporaries. At the beginning of 1493, Maximilian was speaking about an alienation of Wladislas from his father and brothers, an attitude which would become evident a few years later, during Jan Olbracht's attack against Moldavia. Finally, the death of King Casimir on 7 June 1492 and the separation of Lithuania from Poland, offered Ivan III the expected opportunity to claim, sword in hand, the Russian territories,²²⁷ regardless of the Habsburgs' implication.

In such political turmoil, the interest in reconquering Kilia and Akkerman and concern over the Ottoman threat on the eastern border of Christendom fell to the wayside. Djem's presence in the custody of the pope reduced Western fears concerning the Ottoman threat. In 1492, the sultan's expedition against Belgrade and Ragusa caused some anxiety and, in the same year, the sultan's emissaries went to Rome in order to offer the relic of the Holy Lance as a gift to the pope.²²⁸ The delimitation of the border between the Ottoman Empire and Moldavia²²⁹ sealed the strengthening of Ottoman domination north of the Black Sea, but not the complete submission of Moldavia to the Ottoman

224 Veress, *Acta et epistolae*, I, 45–46.

225 *Полное собрание русских летописей*, XXVI, (Moscow, 1959), 287.

226 *Памятники дипломатических сношений съ Имперією Римскою*, I, (St. Petersburg, 1851), 90–91.

227 Bazilevici, *Politica externă*, 253–258.

228 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 426–428.

229 Nicoară Beldiceanu, Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Matei Cazacu, "Recherches sur les Ottomans et la Moldavie ponto-danubienne entre 1484 et 1520", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 45 (1982), 1: 53.

Empire. In 1492, the Venetians knew that the prince of Moldavia, regardless of his status as a tributary to the Porte, refused the demands of the sultan to let the Tartars pass through Moldavia.²³⁰ In the same year, the duke of Milan was informed that Venice would like to have Stephen as captain, the voyvode of Moldavia, “homo sagacissimo et callidissimo in lo mestere de arme”, offering him the sum of 70–80,000 ducats,²³¹ a rumor which illustrates the reputation of the Moldavian lord gained during the fight against the Ottomans. The project of reconquering Kilia and Akkerman was discussed again in the following years, but the divergent political interests of the Christian states finally led to the consolidation of Ottoman domination in the northern Black Sea region.

230 “Se dice che essendo sta rechiesto el Tartaro superiore da questo Signor che venisse in suo subsidio: appare che Stephano Vaivoda non gli habi voluto dar el passo anchor che sia trabutario di questo Signore” (Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 28).

231 Makuscev, *Monumenta Historica Slavorum Meridionalium*, II, 137.

The Crusade against Ottomans and the Political Backdrop in East-Central Europe at the End of the Fifteenth Century

The scandalous election of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia to the Holy See in 1492, where he took the papal name of Alexander VI, was marked by accusations of simony. Several contemporaries saw it as divine punishment, while some optimistic observers hoped that the new pope was intelligent and impartial enough to take real action on the Ottoman threat. Alexander VI declared that in this respect he would continue the policy of his uncle, Pope Callixtus III, though his good intentions did not always line up with the Borgia family's thirst for power.¹ In other ways the 1490s saw a number of initiatives in which the crusading ideal combined with political pragmatism, *raison d'état*, and sometimes the spirit of adventure. One such moment was the Italian campaign of Charles VIII of France, who announced in a decree to all Christian nations on 22 November 1494 that his invasion of Italy represented a first step to driving out the Turks and freeing the Holy places, and after his entry into Naples, Charles had himself crowned Emperor of Constantinople and King of Jerusalem. Alongside these propagandist claims were prophecies which made Charles into a messianic figure.² Nevertheless an alliance between the Holy See, the Holy Roman Empire and Venice thwarted Charles' ambitions and forced him to retreat. The events in Italy raised the question of whether the crusading ideal was still alive at the end of the fifteenth century, or whether it has become simply a propaganda instrument.³

1 Ludwig Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, v, trans. Frederick Ignatius Antrobus, (London, 1898), 377–399; D. S. Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals and War. The Military Church in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe*, (London: Tauris, 2006), 93.

2 André Vauchez, *Saints, Prophetès et visionnaires. Le pouvoir surnaturel au Moyen Age*, (Paris, 1999), 131; for a detailed analysis of Charles VIII's Italian campaign see Anne Denis, *Charles VIII et les Italiens: histoire et mythe*, (Genève, 1979).

3 Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, *Charles VIII et son milieu (1470–1498): la jeunesse au pouvoir*, (Paris, 1975), 181–185; Denis, *Charles VIII et les Italiens*, 62–64; on Papal diplomacy during Charles VIII's expedition see Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals and War*, 95–97.

The “Crusade” of Jan Olbracht

A similar initiative took place in Eastern Europe, though unlike the Italian campaign, it had real implications for the Turks. In 1492, the crown of Poland passed to Jan Olbracht, an ambitious prince of the Jagellonian line who had previously sought the throne of Hungary, competing with his brother Wladislas. Good relations were restored between the brothers, and the Emperor Maximilian let it be known that he dreamed of leading an army against the Turks under the banner of Saint George.⁴ Jan Olbracht planned an attack on Ottoman holdings to reconquer strategic points in the Northern Black Sea region.

At the congress of Levoča in May 1494, he presented his plan for the reconquest of Caffa, Akkerman and Kilia, whereby the Teutonic Order would also be relocated to Podolia to strengthen the Eastern frontier of Christendom. Jan Olbracht also proposed that Stephen the Great be replaced as voivode of Moldavia by Sigismund Jagiello, though his brother, the king of Hungary, disagreed.⁵ As it happened, Jan Olbracht was not ready to carry out his own plan and in June 1494 he concluded a three-year armistice with the sultan.⁶ Lucas Watzelrode, the prince-bishop of Warmia and a magnate of the Polish kingdom, warned the king in 1495 of the risks involved in any future expedition to reconquer Kilia and Akkerman.⁷

After three years of preparation the king sent an envoy to Istanbul to ask the sultan for an “honest peace.” Bayezid II rejected the request, and in spring 1497 both sides were ready for war.⁸ Jan Olbracht had raised an army of 80,000 men and 200 cannons and at the beginning of summer 1497 set out to implement his ambitious plan to reconquer the fortresses on the northern Black Sea coast and take control of the Crimea and the mouth of the Danube. However, the first step was to depose Stephen of Moldavia and replace him with Sigismund Jagiello. This part of the plan became clear by mid-August, after the voivode’s envoys were arrested. A letter attributed to Liborius Naker, secretary to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, shows that Jan Olbracht had made his

4 Janus Moller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades, 1400–1650*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007), 146–147.

5 Ludwik Finkel, “Zjazd Jagiellonow w Lewoczy r. 1494”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, XXVIII (1914): 317–350; Frederyk Papée, *Jan Olbracht*, (Krakow, 1936), 64–77.

6 Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Relations (15th–18th centuries)*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2000), 110–111; 205–206.

7 Papée, *Jan Olbracht*, 82.

8 Marian Biskup, “Polish Diplomacy during the Angevin and Jagiellonian Era (1370–1572)”, *The History of Polish Diplomacy X–XX c.*, ed. Gerard Labuda, Waldemar Michowicz, (Warsaw, 2005), 125–126.

intention public, causing consternation in the Polish camp.⁹ The chancellor, Krzeslaw of Kurowazek, unsuccessfully implored the king not to provoke the voivode of Moldavia.¹⁰ The change of plan was even signalled in royal decrees and charters. Although a decree of 18 July 1497 speaks of an expedition against the Turks to recover Kilia and Akkerman,¹¹ a royal charter of 8 September mentions instead “our present war against Moldavia.”¹²

Jan Olbracht’s true intentions remain a matter of controversy, although of course propaganda remains a part of historical truth even when its purpose is to manipulate that truth.¹³ What is certain is that the campaign was not conceived as a crusade similar to the previous ones, since the pope was very deliberately ignored. By excluding the pope from his plans, the king more or less rejected the institution of crusade.¹⁴ While Jan Olbracht did not consult Rome on his expedition against the Turks, by contrast he discussed the topic with Charles VIII’s ambassador, which is in itself an interesting analogy between the two campaigns.¹⁵

In the Polish case, the auguries were unfavourable at the start of the campaign, while the French king was hailed as the “new Cyrus.” Polish chronicles recorded a number of events foreboding disaster. The king’s white horse drowned in a shallow river, and a powerful wind scattered a herd of three hundred cattle near Lwow, where a certain Sropski prophesied disaster for the Polish army. A thunder-bolt struck the camp, killing a knight and twelve horses. The series of ill omens was complete when the priest who was officiating the Mass for the king dropped the host. The chronicler Miechowita saw the king’s

9 *Die Staatsverträge des Deutschen Ordens in Preussen in XV Jahrhundert*, III, ed. E. Weise, (Marburg, 1966), 164–165; Șerban Papacostea, “Țelurile campaniei lui Ioan Albert în Moldova (1497): un nou izvor”, *Revista de Istorie*, XXVII (1974), 2: 257–262.

10 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, (Krakow, 1874), 24–25.

11 Theodor Wierzbowski (ed.), *Matricularum Regni Poloniae Summaria*, II (1492–1501), (Warsaw, 1907), 46.

12 *Ibid.* 49.

13 The use of the term propaganda for earlier periods may seem questionable; nevertheless there are arguments for such usage in Ph. Contamine, “Aperçus sur la propagande de guerre de la fin du XII^e siècle au début du XV^e siècle”, *Le forme della propaganda politica nel due e nel trecento*, ed. P. Cammarosano, (Rome, 1994), 5–27.

14 Natalia Nowakowska, “Poland and the Crusade in the Reign of King Jan Olbracht, 1492–1501”, *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century. Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 131–134.

15 Janusz Smolucha, *Papiestwo a Polska w latach 1484–1526* (Krakow, 1999), 68–69, note 58.

army as nothing but a pack of sinners who were headed for God's punishment and who grew ever more fearful as they neared their goal.¹⁶

If these episodes might have been interpreted as ill omens only with hindsight, unrest certainly began to spread in the king's camp when it became clear that the Lithuanians were delayed. Jan Olbracht was already campaigning without the support of his elder brother Wladislas of Hungary, and a short while later he also lost his younger brother and most important ally, Grand Duke Alexander of Lithuania. The two armies acted independently even though both parties agreed on the need to mount a campaign to reconquer Kilia and Akkerman, which they saw necessary to keep the peace on their borders.¹⁷ Alexander faced opposition from the Lithuanian nobility, who refused to march on Moldavia with him and pressure from his father-in-law Ivan III, who pointed out that any attack on Stephen the Great would mean war between Lithuania and Muscovy.¹⁸ Under the circumstances, the Lithuanian army stopped at Bratslav, where they followed developments closely.¹⁹

Despite these setbacks, the campaign continued and the Polish army headed for the Moldavian capital Suceava, since Jan Olbracht believed that a part of the Moldavian great nobility would join him. Wapowski noted the king's hopes that Moldavians suffering under Stephen's cruelty and tyranny would defect, and revealed Jan Olbracht's mild treatment of prisoners; he started by giving the captives gifts, but once the Polish king saw that his expectations were wrong he began to use force.²⁰ The Moldavian *Anonymous Chronicle* noted the arrival of the Polish army at Suceava on Sunday 24 September and the beginning of the siege on Tuesday 26 September 1497.²¹ During these two days, Jan Olbracht tried to persuade the castellan of Suceava, Luca Arbure, to surrender the citadel. According to a later document from July 1504, Jan Olbracht suspected that the castellan had designs on the throne of Moldavia and tried to win him over, but the plan failed.²² According to the *Bykhoviets Chronicle* the garrison declared that they would not betray their lord, and that the king would have to

16 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 261–262.

17 A. Lewicki (ed.), *Codex epistolaris saeculi decimi quinti III*, (Krakow, 1894), 436: “.. dokole Bielohorod a Kileia iest w pohańskich rukach, niemożet pokoy biti od wszeki hranicam naszym oboieho państwa”.

18 K. V. Bazilevici, *Politica externă a statului rus centralizat în a doua jumătate a secolului al XV-lea* (Bucharest, 1955), 311.

19 Alexandru V. Boldur, *Ștefan cel Mare, voievod al Moldovei (1457–1504). Studiu de istorie socială și politică* (Madrid, 1970), 277–278.

20 *Scriptores rerum Polonicarum*, II, 27.

21 P. P. Panaitescu (ed.), *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV–XVI*, (Bucharest, 1959), 20.

22 Fryderyk Papée (ed.), *Akta Aleksandra*, (Krakow, 1927), 416.

defeat voivode Stephen, “for then the citadels and the whole country will be in your hands”.²³

Stephen had left Suceava on 27 August once Jan Olbracht’s intentions became clear. It is hard to believe that the king’s decision took him by surprise, given the precedent of 1487 and the antipathy between the two monarchs. The idea of a preventive war against Moldavia had become reality.²⁴ Stephen the Great had been expecting this, and had mobilised his own allies in good time. Pressure upon Lithuania from Ivan III was followed by further threats from Mengli-Girey, the khan of Perekop, and the voivode had also sent an envoy to emperor Maximilian.²⁵ The messenger was received on 11 August and requested a private audience once he had offered his gifts.²⁶ The subject of the audience can be found in a Hungarian report monitoring diplomatic relations between Moldavia and the Holy Roman Empire in this period. Knowing of the discussions that had taken place between the kings of Poland and Hungary at Levoča, Stephen asked for Maximilian’s protection in the event that their anti-Ottoman campaign should turn against him.²⁷

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- 23 “Korol że Olbracht przytiahnuwszy do Soczawy y stoiał pod nim neskolko dni, y porazumel iż horodu wczynity ne możet niczoho, wsi bo Wołochowe kotoryie byli obohnany w horode, takowy otwīt dawali iemu: weday pewno, iako my gospodaru naszomu, y horodu ieho zraycami byty ne możem, gospodar bo nasz Stefan wojewoda iest na poli so swoim woyskom, iesli chcesz poydy, zwyteż ieho, a horody y wsia zemla ieho odnoho czasu w rukach twoich budut” (*Полное собрание русских летописей*, XVII, (St. Petersburg, 1907), 555).
- 24 Șerban Papacostea, “La guerre ajournée: les relations polono-moldaves en 1478. Réflexions en marge d’un texte de Filippo Buonaccorsi Calimachus”, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire*, XI (1972), 1: 3–21.
- 25 Ștefan S. Gorovei and Maria-Magdalena Székely, *Princeps omni laude maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2005), 325–327.
- 26 *Regesta Imperii*, XIV/2 (*Ausgewählte Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Maximilian I*), ed. Hermann Wiesflecker, (Wien-Köln-Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1993), no. 5158.
- 27 “... qualiter waywoda Moldavie intimasset rege Polonie, dum fingit velle ire contra Turcos, proditorie venisse se ipsum, et per hoc quod fecit tantam cladem in Christianitate editam, quanta vix unquam fuit edita vel in ipso Constantinopolitano excidio, et quia duos fratres essent rex Hungarie et rex Polonie scire daret serenissimo Romanorum regi, quia se ipsis duobus fratribus waywoda nunquam amplius consideret, unde et rogaret idem waywoda Romanorum regem, ut dignaretur eum in tutelam suam unacum regno suo suscipere et in casu necessitatis non derelinquerentur” (Ioan-Aurel Pop and Alexandru Simon, “Moldova și celălalt imperiu: preliminariile și consecințele conspirației lui Maximilian I de Habsburg și Ștefan cel Mare (1497)”, *Vocația istoriei. Prinos profesorului Șerban Papacostea*, ed. O. Cristea and Gh. Lazăr, Brăila, 2008, 390).

The most significant aid to the voivode came from his sovereign, the king of Hungary. On 9 September 1497 Bartolomeus Dragffy wrote from Braşov that the townsfolk of Sibiu had hurried to send cannons in response to Stephen the Great's call for aid, and that Stephen's envoy was in Braşov with him.²⁸ Not long thereafter 12,000 men, led by the voivode of Transylvania, would join the Moldavian army, estimated at 40,000 men. Dragffy was related to Stephen by marriage, and in 1494 had accompanied King Wladislas to Levoča; it is believed that he informed the voivode about Jan Olbracht's plans.²⁹ Once he arrived in Moldavia, Dragffy sent a harsh letter to the Polish king, which Jan Olbracht referred to when he later declared that Dragffy was an enemy of peace and of the alliance between the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland. The letter offended Jan Olbracht so deeply that he did not believe that Dragffy was following Wladislas's wishes.³⁰

More troops came from the voivode of Wallachia, from the Tatars, and most importantly, from the Ottomans, the declared enemy in Jan Olbracht's campaign. Although the Turkish contingent was numerically small, it played a key role in the dynamics of the conflict. After the end of the hostilities Jan Olbracht declared that he had attacked Moldavia in response to offenses against him and against all Christendom, and that he had decided to do so when the voivode's envoys told him that their lord was a subject of the sultan and that the king was not welcome in Moldavia.³¹ The Polish and Moldavian chronicles do not support this version of events and historians have been sceptical of Jan Olbracht's credibility. However, two documents from 1497, published only in summary, show that Stephen had informed the sultan on Hungarian and Polish mobilisation, telling him that Jan Olbracht was leading an army to

28 Vasile Pârvan, *Studii de istorie medievală și modernă*, ed. Lucian Năstasă, (Bucharest, 1990), 188.

29 Fryderyk Papée, "Imperial Expansion and the Supremacy of the Gentry, 1466–1506", *The Cambridge History of Poland: From the Origins to Sobieski*, ed. W. F. Reddaway et al. (Cambridge, 1950), 259.

30 "Non venientibus autem nunciis maiestatis sue, iam nostros interea expediebamus dies (!) Barholomeus Draffi, palatinus Transsilvanie, cum certis Ungaris subditis maiestatis sue, contra federa et pacem regnorum perpetuam, nobis diffidavit hostemque se confessus est, ac literis suis, quas ad nos scripsit, contra nos impudencius usus est. Et quamvis ea, que per dominum Draffi Bartholomeum denunciata et facta fuere, non credebamus de voluntate maiestatis sue processisse, tamen non sine magna admiratione et gravi dolore iila et tulimus et nobiscum reputavimus" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 445).

31 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 445–446.

Kamyanets-Podilskiy to attack the Ottoman Empire.³² In the light of this new evidence, Jan Olbracht's version of events has been challenged.³³ However, the documents from the archive of the Topkapı Saray are not from 1497, but from the reign of the voivode Stephen the Young (1517–1527) and concern the political situation in 1521 before the conquest of Belgrade.³⁴

Moreover, Turkish chronicles recorded that Stephen the Great informed the Ottomans about Jan Olbracht's intentions. One contemporary chronicler, Ibn Kemal, noted that the voivode told the sultan about the Polish king's plans to depose him and then attack the Ottoman Empire. Bayezid ordered the beylerbey of Rumelia, Yakub Pasha, to mobilise the army at Plovdiv and sent a *firman* to Mesih Pasha, sanjakkbey of Silistra and governor of Kilia and Akkerman, ordering him to offer military aid if the voivode of Moldavia requested it once the enemy was upon him.³⁵ Any military aid to the Christians needed the sultan's assent.³⁶ Thus it is clear that Stephen had asked Bayezid for help before Jan Olbracht had made his intentions for Moldavia public, so that it would be misleading to consider this the direct *casus belli*. Rumors about the king's plan to depose the voivode spread once the Polish army reached Przemyśl at the beginning of May, more than three months before the Moldavian envoys were arrested.³⁷ It is obvious that each ruler had suspicions about the other's intentions and acted accordingly. Stephen used the arrival of 2,000 Turkish troops in Moldavia to put pressure on the enemies, disguising some of his own Moldavian troops in Turkish clothing so that Ottoman aid would appear to be more substantial.³⁸ At the same time, Jan Olbracht used the same Ottoman aid as a pretext for his plan to depose the voivode. Bayezid in turn took advantage

32 Nigâr Anafarta (ed.), *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Lehistan (Polonya) arasındaki münasabetlerle ilgili tarihi belgeler*, (Istanbul, 1979), 9.

33 Janusz Smolucha, "Kilka uwag na temat wyprawy czarnomorskiej Jana Olbrachta w 1497", *Studia Historyczne*, XL (1997), 3: 415.

34 Tahsin Gemil, "Din relațiile moldo-otomane în primul sfert al secolului al XVI-lea (pe marginea a două documente din arhivele de la Istanbul)", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Iași*, IX (1972): 133–143; Mustafa Ali Mehmet, (ed.), *Documente turcești privind istoria României*, I, (Bucharest, 1976), 11–12.

35 Nagy Pienaru, "Izvoare otomane privind Moldova lui Ștefan cel Mare", *Analele Putnei*, v (2009), 1: 35.

36 Ovidiu Cristea, "« Ami de l'ami et ennemi de l'ennemi »: La collaboration militaire moldo-ottomane pendant le règne d'Etienne le Grand", *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe*, III (2011): 97.

37 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 24.

38 Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române*, 21; Mihai Guboglu and Mustafa Mehmet, (eds.), *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, I (Bucharest, 1966), 330 and 465.

of the situation to strengthen his position in the region, though he suspected that the voivode of Moldavia and the king of Poland might actually have reached an understanding, as was recorded at the time.³⁹

While Jan Olbracht was besieging Suceava, his own forces were encircled by those of Stephen and his allies, who cut off the Polish army's supply lines and any possibility of retreat.⁴⁰ Wladislas of Hungary intervened from Bohemia to extract his brother from this critical situation, by sending the marshal of the court, Václav Čič, to negotiate a truce. The fact that he entrusted this mission to a Czech noble rather than to a Hungarian magnate can only be explained by the powerful dislike that the Hungarian nobility felt toward Jan Olbracht following his attempt to obtain St. Stephen's crown.⁴¹ Wladislas saw the attack on Moldavia as a slight and a breach of the terms agreed at Levoča, and asked his brother to call off the campaign and withdraw his troops. In return he offered to include Poland in the truce with the sultan, whose ambassador was then at Buda.⁴² Jan Olbracht accepted the "terms imposed by the ambassador" and later explained that he had done so "out of brotherly love, and in order not to cause a war between Poland and Hungary."⁴³ However, he did not agree to a full peace treaty, but only to a truce of a few months, which was then broken after only a week.⁴⁴

The terms of the truce are uncertain, with the narrative sources agreeing only that the Polish army was to withdraw from Moldavia by the same route they had come. Thereafter each side accused the other of breaking the truce, and historians who have tried to establish the road followed by the Polish troops have reached equally contradictory conclusions. In fact, the truce suited neither party, though it was a rational solution. Stephen the Great preserved his good relations with the king of Hungary by accepting the truce and avoided a further consolidation of Ottoman power in the region, but it blemished his reputation as a victorious commander. The chancellor Krzeslaw of Kurowazek sought to convince his king not to antagonise the voivode of Moldavia by arguing that Stephen had defeated both Matthias Corvinus and Sultan Mehmed II,

39 Ludovicus Tuberionius, *Commentariorum de rebus quae temporibus eius in illa Europae parte* (Frankfurt, 1603), 130: "Verebatur enim Turca, ne quam fraude Valachi molirentur: eo quod arbitrabatur eos (ut fere et caeteros Christianos) malo esse in Turca animo".

40 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 261.

41 Krzysztof Baczkowski, "Kto był posłem Władysława II pod Suczawa w 1497 roku?", *Prace Historyczne*, 123 (1997): 152–153; *Lietuvos Metrika*, v, (Vilnius, 1993), 128.

42 Jozef Garbacik (ed.), *Materiały do dziejów dyplomacji polskiej z lat 1486–1516* (Wrocław-Warsaw-Krakow, 1966), 25–30.

43 *Ibid.* 33–34.

44 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 28.

yet the voivode also showed a clear sign of weakness by allowing the Poles to leave Moldavia without joining battle. For Jan Olbracht, the truce meant a way out of a situation which could easily become catastrophic but it was certainly no cause for rejoicing. A retreat without battle represented a shameful ending to his campaign and was bound to disgruntle the Polish nobility whom he had burdened with new taxes and military duties just before the campaign set out. Faced with the enmity of neighbouring states, diplomatic isolation, and the prospect of internal dissent, the king was forced to make concessions to the Estates of the kingdom. It was no accident that after the campaign, a rumor began to circulate in Poland that the king had gone to war on the advice of Callimachus in order to destroy part of the Polish nobility; the phrase that “the nobility (*szlachta*) died under Olbracht” was coined at this time.⁴⁵

The course of battle reflects the ambiguous position of the two sides as well.⁴⁶ On 26 October, Polish troops were ambushed as they were passing through the forest near the village of Kuzmin. One day earlier the king and the main body of the army of Greater Poland traversed the forest without incident. There followed a week of fighting, with victories for both sides; some of the Polish victories were decisive in allowing the army to leave Moldavia, but the clashes were nevertheless seen as a disaster for the Poles. The image of captives being led tied by their own hair before the voivode of Moldavia, or taken prisoners by the Turks, was so powerful that it was left out in the second edition of Miechowita’s chronicle.⁴⁷ Frederyk Papée held that the defeat in the forests of Bucovina was not as dreadful as it was subsequently depicted.

45 Martin Kromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum* (Basel, 1555), 646; *Полное собрание русских летописей*, II, (St. Petersburg, 1843), 361.

46 For details see A. Lewicki, “Król Jan Olbracht o klesce bukovinskiej r. 1497”, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, VII (1893): 1–15 and 455–456; Eduard Fisher, “Kozmin, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des polnisch-moldavischen Konfliktes im Jahre 1497”, *Jahrbuch des Bukovinaer Landesmuseumus*, x (1902): 37; Gheorghe Duzinchevici, “Războiul moldo-polon din anul 1497. Critica izvoarelor”, *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, VIII (1975): 9–61; Z. Spieralski, *Awantury moldawskie*, (Warsawa, 1967); C. Rezachevici and Dan Căpățână, “Campania lui Ștefan cel Mare din 1497 împotriva lui Ioan Albert”, *File de istorie militară a poporului român*, III, (Bucharest, 1975), 38–52.

47 “Deinde hostilis exercitus Prutenos et Mazovitas castra Polonorum sequentes et divisos aut occidit, aut captivos vendidit. Aliqui Poloni ligati crinibus capitibus crispatis longis et simul iuncti in conspectum Palatini Stephani pellebantur. Reliqui a Thurcis et hostibus distracti in Thurciam aliasque regiones abducebantur. Exercitus autem regius superpermanens, tota hebdomada donec Russiam intraverat, persecutiones et molestias perpetuus est. Fuitque ingens ac inestimabilis in Polonia de tali casu moeror” (*Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 262); Nowakowska, “Poland and the Crusade”, 133.

The truce of Suceava was concluded with honor, the greater part of the artillery was salvaged, and not more than a few thousand of the nobility died; Papée argued that, once the campaign was over, the chronicles exaggerate the outcome of the battles.⁴⁸ The effects of the defeat were disproportionate, too. Internationally, Jagiellonian Poland lost its prestige, and gained political isolation and exposure to the Ottoman raids as a direct consequence.⁴⁹

Crusade Rhetoric and Political Propaganda

Jan Olbracht, aware of this loss of prestige, tried to present his defeat as an Ottoman victory against all of Christendom. The king's court was a scene of good cheer and celebrations, as if to celebrate a victory, and used the high clergy of the kingdom to spread his own version of recent events.⁵⁰ In November 1497, the king's brother Cardinal Fryderyk told the Prince-Bishop of Warmia, Lucas Watzelrode, the official version of the Moldavian campaign: the king had ridden out against the Turks, but the voivode of Moldavia had declared himself a loyal subject of the sultan and an enemy of the king, so that Jan Olbracht had little choice but to besiege Suceava. The king's army was attacked by Turks and Moldavians and suffered losses because the king himself was in precarious health.⁵¹ Another high-ranking cleric, Archbishop Andrei Boryszewski of Lwow, was sent to Buda in December 1497 along with the marshal Rafal Leszczynski to give a more detailed account of this version of the events. Jan Olbracht insisted in his message that his actions in Moldavia had been justified and rebuffed his brother Wladislas's accusation, via Václav Čič, that he had acted aggressively. He also complained that the truce negotiated by his brother's emissary had been broken and demanded that Stephen the Great be punished, having shown himself to be an enemy of Christendom.⁵²

48 Papée, *Jan Olbracht*, 150–151.

49 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 127.

50 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 33.

51 Natalia Nowakowska, *Church, State and Dynasty in Renaissance Poland. The Career of Cardinal Fryderyk Jagiellon (1468–1503)*, (Ashgate, 2012), 47.

52 "Rogabitur deinde suam maiestatem, ut hoc scelus perfide et damna, nobis per eundem voievodam, confidentem in sue maiestatis protectione ac defensione, contra prefatas condiciones illata ad animam revocet tanquam propria, et habita ratione fraterne charitatis et huius note communis domus nostre et federis predictorum, velit nobis adesse consilio fraterno atque auxilio, ut idem voievoda perfidie sue debitas soluat penas, ut aboleatur commune dedecus domui nostre illatum tollaturque sequela hostibus nominis

Wladislas was in no great hurry to respond to his brother's requests, but Stephen the Great seized the opportunity; for him, the war with Poland was not over. Stephen began a campaign of reprisals for the damage caused in Moldavia, and this time he had much more substantial support from the Turks and the Tatars. The build-up of troops at Silistra caused consternation in the kingdom of Hungary, though the voivode of Wallachia assured the burghers of Braşov that there was no danger to them and that the Ottomans were marching to support Moldavia.⁵³ In May 1498, an army under Stephen the Great and Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey raided south-eastern Poland and laid waste to everything in their path.⁵⁴ Poland was directly exposed to the Ottoman threat for the first time and the effect was devastating. The destruction was widespread and a great number of prisoners "who replenished both Asia and Greece" were enslaved; the king's inability to defend the kingdom led to fear and despair.⁵⁵ On 27 May 1498, Jan Olbracht admitted his difficulties in the wake of the Turkish, Tatar and Moldavian invasion in a letter to Luca Watzelrode, declaring that the situation was a threat not just to him but to all of Christendom.⁵⁶

Under these new circumstances, the king resorted to crusading rhetoric, as we can see clearly in the words of Nicholas Rozemberg at the imperial diets of Freiburg, Cologne, and Überlingen, asking for aid in the war against the Turks.⁵⁷ The instructions of 31 May 1498 to the envoy speak of a growing Ottoman threat and invite Emperor Maximilian to join the kings of Hungary and Poland

christiani data, quod certo arbitramur eius maiestatem facturam" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 447).

- 53 I. Bogdan (ed.), *Documente privitoare la relațiile Țării Românești cu Braşovul și cu Țara Ungurească în secolele XV–XVI* (Bucharest, 1905), 216.
- 54 Zbigniew Spieralski, "Po klesce Bukowinskiej 1497 roku. Pierwsze najazdy Turków na Polskę", *Studia i Materiały do Historii Wojskowości*, IX (1963), 1: 45–58.
- 55 "Amplissime regiones longe et late flammis collucebant, pavor ubique, fuga miserabilis, trepidacio et lachryme, cruoris plofluvio vie cadaveribus stade mandebant. Plurimi mortales, qui in memoribus se tutos esse arbitrantur, hostium interventu, qui curruum et hominem fugientium vestigiis herebant, intercepti et in duram immanissimorum barbarorum servituti abducti sunt. Supra centum hominum milia barbarus hostis, ut tum fam aerat, abduxit, Greciamque et Asiam cultoribus Polonis ac Roxolanis replevit, Alberto rege et Polonis, ut in re insperata ac subita, ad regni defensionem imparatissimis ac etiam tam consternatis, ut plerique et majoribus, ni pudor eos retraxisset, de deserendo regno consilia agitaverint. Ad tam insanam nonnulli minus cordati venerant desperationem!" (*Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 33).
- 56 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 449.
- 57 Krzysztof Baczkowski, "Działność polsko-węgierskiej dyplomacji w Rzeszy Niemieckiej w latach 1498–1500 oraz sojusz Jagiellonów z Francją", *Studia Historyczne*, XX (1977), 4: 518–523.

in a coalition against the Turks to benefit all Christendom.⁵⁸ In his reply of 9 July 1498, Maximilian struck a note of caution and proposed that the alliance be discussed at a future diet.⁵⁹ Despite the fact that the kings were brothers, cooperation between Poland and Hungary was more of an illusion than a reality.

Wladislas did not reply to his brother's embassy of 1497 until June the following year. He categorically refused Jan Olbracht's request and declared that he supported the voivode of Moldavia, calling Stephen the guarantor of peace between the two kingdoms and reporting that the voivode was ready to conclude a peace and would no longer allow the Turks to attack Poland.⁶⁰ Thus any alliance between Hungary and Poland depended on the conclusion of a peace with Moldavia in which the king of Poland would be forced to renounce any attempt at revenge. Capitulating in the face of the fierce Ottoman attacks and pressure from his brother, on 18 July 1498 Jan Olbracht concluded a treaty with the Hungarian envoys guaranteeing perpetual peace with Moldavia and agreeing on the conditions for a future alliance against the Turks.⁶¹

Even while this treaty was being negotiated in Krakow, another document was also being drawn up for Nicholas Rozemberg to present to the imperial diet at Freiburg. This was a call for aid addressed to the Estates of the Empire using the terms of crusading discourse. The document reiterates Jan Olbracht's good intentions in going to war against the Turks to reconquer the northern Black Sea fortresses held by the sultan. The Polish king had withdrawn from Moldavia at the request of the king of Hungary, but the perfidious voivode had then attacked him, helped by Turkish allies, and had opened the way for the Turks to raid his kingdom. After cruelly devastating Poland and carrying men, women, children, expectant mothers, and priests off into slavery, the Turks were now preparing a new attack. According to reports which Jan Olbracht had received from his brother Wladislas, the sultan had gathered an army of 60,000 men in Anatolia and was already crossing the Danube to invade Russia. He would be joined by the voivodes of Wallachia and Moldavia, and the Grand Duke of Lithuania had reported that three Tatar chieftains were already massing their troops at the border of the kingdom. Since no Christian prince could hope to resist such a concentration of forces on his own, Jan Olbracht asked urgently for help from the Emperor and other Christian princes, since if Poland

58 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 449–452.

59 Garbacik, *Materialy*, 47–48.

60 “Et quoniam in ipso voyewoda omne fundamentum et tota vis pacis et quietis inter hec inclita regna” (Garbacik, *Materialy*, 41 and 42–43).

61 M. Dogiel (ed.), *Codex diplomaticus Regni Poloniae et Magnus Ducatus Lithuaniae*, 1, (Vilnae, 1758), 89–91.

fell the Holy Roman Empire and all Christendom would suffer. His kingdom, he declared, had always been the bulwark of Christendom (*semper singulare Christianorum propugnaculum*). He mentioned the examples of the Goths, Huns, Tartars and other Scythian tribes who easily reached Pannonia, Germany and Italy whenever they were not stopped in Poland. Another argument was “zeal for the holy religion,” motivating Christians to liberate Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the hands of the Saracens.⁶²

The king of Poland’s call for a crusade was received with interest. On 6 August 1498, the papal legate Leonello Chierigati wrote to Alexander VI that the diet had decided that day to invite the pope, all the princes of Christendom and the voivode of Moldavia to send their representatives to a diet at Worms which was to discuss a general peace among the Christian princes and the organization of a joint crusade against the Turks.⁶³ On 19 August, the legate wrote again with further details, reporting that the king of Poland’s envoy wanted deeds not words and that the king of Hungary had sent an embassy to the Emperor and was preparing to fight the Turks alongside his brother. The voivode of Moldavia wished to join this alliance, but the Grand Duke of Lithuania could not take part since he expected an attack from Muscovy.⁶⁴ This news from Hungary is largely contained in the peace treaty which Wladislas ratified at the beginning of August.⁶⁵ Maximilian had already received envoys from Stephen the Great and knew his intentions. He congratulated the voivode on his victory against Jan Olbracht, and advised him to continue his campaign against Poland with Turkish and Tatar help to prevent any lasting peace between the kingdoms of Poland and Hungary.⁶⁶ The crusading rhetoric concealed conflicting political interests which are not often clear to us today. Maximilian’s delaying tactics on

62 Marquard Freher (ed.), *Rerum Germanicarum Scriptores aliquot insignes*, II, (Argentorati, 1717), 485–488; E. Hurmuzaki (ed.), *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, II/2, (Bucharest, 1891), 399–402.

63 *Regesta Imperii*, XIV/2, no. 6539.

64 *Ibid.* no. 6606.

65 Dogiel, *Codex diplomaticus*, I, 92–95.

66 “Dicis, inquit, multas salutes waywode nomine nostro; agere quoque nos maximas Deo gratias de ista victoria contra regem Polonie obtenta; dicis sibi, quod non se deserat, sed continuet negocium contra Polonos, tam cum Tartaris quam cum Turcis et cum Turco habeat strictissimam intelligentiam, dummodo a Christianitate pietas non divellatur; maneat autem in tali intelligentia cum Turco interim, quosque ego dispositis rebus meis trans Austriam revertar et curet negotium cum illis, quos scit et qui apud eum sunt iam ex nomine designati, ut inter Wladislaum regem Hungarie et Iohannem Albertum regem Polonie aliqua unio vel concordia non sequatur” (Pop and Simon, “Moldova și celălalt imperiu”, 391).

the question of crusade were prompted by his immediate goals, when he saw a chance of fulfilling in the political context of the times.

Jan Olbracht continued to be optimistic even though his call had led to no concrete deeds and only a promise of further discussions. In a letter to Luca Watzelrode of 14 September 1498, the king wrote of his hopes for the diet of Worms and the possibility of a powerful Christian coalition with papal support.⁶⁷ The canon Jan Porsnowski also sounded a note of optimism in a letter to Rome in autumn 1498 in which he wrote of Turkish and Tatar incursions into Poland and reported a victory of 10 September, in which the *knyaz* Constantin Ostrogski and the *hetman* Jan Trnka defeated an army of 14,000 Turks and Tatars.⁶⁸ On 10 October 1498, Alexander VI wrote to Jan Olbracht, expressing his concern at the growing power of the Turks and the need for joint action by the Christian princes.⁶⁹

Later, in November 1498, the Turks invaded Poland once more, but this time a combination of bad weather and Stephen the Great's *volte-face* made the campaign a failure. A harsh frost decimated the Ottoman army and was seen as divine punishment.⁷⁰ Those who survived the cold were then attacked by the voivode's forces once they crossed the river Prut. Stephen used weapons and armor captured the previous year to disguise his men as Polish soldiers, thereby avoiding any suspicion from the sultan.⁷¹ The voivode thus sent a clear signal that he wanted an end to hostilities with Poland, a process finalised over the following months. Negotiations at Krakow with Hungarian and Moldavian envoys led to the signing of a further new treaty on 15 April 1499, which in theory laid the foundations for a powerful anti-Ottoman alliance. The king of Poland renounced his claims to sovereignty and the voivode of Moldavia was to be considered an ally of Poland, who undertook to aid the kingdom in the case of an Ottoman attack.⁷² On 11 July 1499, Stephen the Great ratified the treaty which his envoys had signed at Krakow and declared a solemn peace between

67 Karol Górski, Marian Biskup (eds.), *Akta Stanow Prus Krolewskich*, III/2, (Torun, 1963), 64: "Itaque noster orator cum serenissimi domini Hungariae oratoribus iecerunt fundamenta obtinendorum auxiliorum non inutilia, ex quibus poterit ellici modus et conditio tantae necessitati conveniendi; ut tamen finaliter constitueretur modus ferendorum auxiliorum, Regnis istis duobus nominatis, et quoniam hostis tam validi fera intentio frenetur, instituta et alia conventio in Vormatia, ad quam debent convenire summi pontificis et omnium regum et principum oratores".

68 Smolucha, *Papiestwo a Polska*, 72, note 73.

69 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 453–454.

70 *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, v, (Lwow, 1888), 274.

71 *Ibid.* 275.

72 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 127.

himself and Jan Olbracht as the result of mediation by Wladislas of Hungary. The most important clauses concerned an alliance against the Turks and here Stephen set out the circumstances under which he would move against the sultan. The voivode would march forth only once the kings of Hungary and Poland had reached the Danube, and would need advance consultation on any change to their route.⁷³ Moldavia's position as a frontier territory between Christendom and the Ottoman Empire is reflected in the way the document discusses partial military aid in case of necessity: "we will give the Turks neither aid nor advice, except if some power should come from the Turkish Emperor or from the *sanjak* or from his subjects which would force us to give them aid."⁷⁴ On 14 September 1499, Stephen ratified a separate anti-Ottoman treaty with the Grand Duke of Lithuania in the same terms which had been negotiated the previous year.⁷⁵ This treaty was concluded at the insistence of Ivan III of Muscovy, who was father-in-law to Grand Duke Alexander and whose son had married Stephen's daughter. Interestingly enough, the treaty was signed at a moment when relations between Lithuania and Muscovy began to worsen.

Crusade Rumours in Venice and Ottoman Propaganda

This system of alliances, overseen by Wladislas of Hungary, was an important step toward a general coalition of Christian princes, the likes of which was topic of discussions in Europe at the time. Nonetheless, although there was a general interest in crusade, there was a considerable difference between the events playing out on the Eastern borders of Christendom and how Western Europeans perceived these, a difference much like that between fiction and reality. For most Western observers, or at least for the Venetians, the Ottoman Empire was attacked in 1497 by a large Christian coalition forged by Poland, Hungary, Moldavia and Russia, and supported and even led by the Tatars (!).⁷⁶ This strange perception resulted from the circulation and spread of news at the end of the fifteenth century. As usual, a large number of false, doubtful or distorted reports on the preparation, aims, development, and conclusion of

73 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 352–353.

74 I. Bogdan (ed.), *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, (Bucharest, 1903), 423–424.

75 *Ibid.* 442–446.

76 F. Stefani (ed.), *I Diarii di Marino Sanudo*, I, (Venezia, 1879), 950: "Fo divulgato una nova come, per avisi abuti di Polana, che il re di Polana, il re di Hungaria et Boemia, Stefano Carabodam, il re di Rossia etc. havevano facto una liga insieme contra turchi. Havevano facto lhorò capitano el gran Cam. Quello seguirà scriverò".

the Polish campaign circulated alongside trustworthy evidence. We may assume that, in many cases, those interested in the Polish “crusade” intermingled news from various sources, and the result was a strange mixture of accurate and doubtful information. It is striking that such stories had a better circulation and a wider diffusion than more accurate testimonies. For instance, many reports on the Polish “crusade” claimed that the Christian forces had achieved the goal of the expedition and had conquered the ports of Kilia and Akkerman, occupied by the Ottoman Empire in 1484. Needless to say, although Jan Olbracht claimed that he intended to conquer these fortresses, his army never reached their walls. Many contemporaries considered the capture of Kilia and Akkerman *a fait accompli* and the starting point of a large offensive against the Ottoman Empire. According to a letter from Chios written on June 25 1497, an alliance had been forged by Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary and their combined armies had conquered various Tatar lands along with Akkerman, Licostomo, “Lorexo,”⁷⁷ and other places as far as Caffa.⁷⁸

It is surprising that even Venice, the “capital” of information and intelligence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, seems to have credited such inaccurate news.⁷⁹ Almost all the letters related to Jan Olbracht’s “crusade” which arrived in the Republic were full of contradictions, discrepancies, noticeable ambiguity and inaccuracies about the protagonists involved and the geography of the region. The names of the Christian rulers involved in preparing the Polish campaign are completely ignored, with the exception of Stephen the Great of

77 For this fortress at the mouth of the Dniepr see Ștefan Andreescu, “Moldavia’s Pontic Policy: Stephen the Great and Illice Castle”, *Il Mar Nero*, III (1997–1998): 179–187.

78 “è sta scritto como il re di Polana, Boemia e Hungaria, tres concordos fecerunt exercitum, et hanno preso luogi in Tartaria, i qual confina cum Pollana. Etiam Moncastro e Licostomo, et à preso el castello dicto Lorexo a la marina, et dice andarano scorando fino a Caffa”, *I Diarii di Marino Sanudo*, I, 756–757.

79 Pierre Sardella, *Nouvelles et spéculations à Venise au début du XVI^e siècle*, Paris, sine anno [Cahiers des Annales-1]; Hans J. Kissling, “Venezia come centro di informazioni sui Turchi”, *Venezia centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (sec. XV–XVI). Aspetti e problemi*, eds. H. G. Beck, M. Manoussakas, A. Pertusi, (Firenze, 1977), 111–116; G. K. Hassiotis, “Venezia e i domini veneziani tramite di informazioni sui turchi per gli spagnoli nel sec. XVI”, *Venezia centro di mediazione*, 117–136; Eric R. Dursteler, “Power and Information: the Venetian Postal System in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean”, *From Florence to the Mediterranean: Studies in Honor of Anthony Molho*, (Firenze, 2009), 601–623; Eric R. Dursteler, “Describing or distorting the “Turk”? The Relazioni of the Venetian Ambassadors in Constantinople as Historical Source”, *Acta Histriae*, 19 (2011): 231–248; Filippo de Vivo, *Information & Communication in Venice. Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

Moldavia, but even here we find many different versions of the same name: *Stefano Carabodam*,⁸⁰ *Stephano de Mondavia Charabodam et ducha Ulacho*,⁸¹ *Ulacho Charabodam*,⁸² *Charabodam zoè ducha Ulacho*,⁸³ *Carabodam*⁸⁴ or simply *il vlacho*.⁸⁵ The recurrence of “Charabodam” or “Carabodam,” a corrupted form of the Turkish *Karabogdan* as a name for Moldavia, suggests that whatever the origin of the news, it passed through Ottoman territory.

The same imprecision can be found in the toponyms; Kilia and Akkerman, the bones of contention between the Poles and Ottomans in 1497, appear in various forms and are sometimes confused in the news gathered by Sanudo and in the letters of Domenico Malipiero, which place Akkerman at the mouth of the Danube (“*su la bocha dil Danubio sul Mar Mazor*”), an obvious confusion with Kilia. It is a striking error, since we may assume that the Venetians were familiar with Black Sea trade centres.

One can obviously ask why the Venetians perceived the event in such a distorted way, and why more accurate information was ignored or left aside. An answer to these questions is suggested by Marino Sanudo’s famous *Diaries*, which gathered fifteen reports on the Polish campaign. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand why Sanudo, who himself expressed doubts on certain pieces of news on other occasions, seemed to have had complete confidence in news about the Polish crusade.⁸⁶

Some clues for an explanation could be suggested by a closer look at how Venice collected information from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the fifteenth century. First of all, it should be emphasised that even though the Venetians had established diplomatic contacts with both Poland and Moldavia

80 *I Diarii di Marino Sanudo*, I, 950.

81 *Ibid.* 740.

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.* 744.

84 *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.* 800.

86 For instance in November 1497, according to news from Savoy, Wladislas II of Hungary had died; a few days later, other news claimed he was alive and in good health: “se intese di la morte dil re Ladyslao di Hungaria et Boemia, la qual morte de li si sapeva per certi sguizari venuti dal campo del dicto Hungaro era a l'incontro dei Turchi. Et non lassoe heredi perche non havea moglie (...) Ma pocho da poi se intese esser san, ne haver hauto mal niuno sichè de la sua morte non est loquendum. Pur pareva si trattasse trieve con dicto re et collegai et el Turcho, al qual erano soi ambadori” (*I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, I, 819).

in previous years, information about these distant Christian countries remained scarce in Venetian political circles.⁸⁷

Moreover, in 1497 the Republic of Saint Mark had no envoy at the Sublime Porte because of a diplomatic incident in 1492, when the Venetian *bailo* Girolamo Marcello was accused of spying and was expelled from Constantinople by Bayezid II.⁸⁸ Venetian representatives in the Ottoman capital ceased to send their regular *dispacci* to the lagoon. Since the sultan had cut the Venetian government's most reliable source of information, the Republic depended on secondary evidence. Sanudo used private letters, reports by Venetian agents in or around the Ottoman Empire, or documents written by Venetian citizens or foreigners who had heard news from Ottoman territory one way or another. The reliability of such documents is questionable, as their authors (merchants, navigators, spies, and diplomats) had few ways to check the credibility of the information. This state of affairs lasted until the Venetian-Ottoman peace settlement of 1503 and had a direct impact on the accuracy of information sent to the Venetian government. King Jan Olbracht's expedition was no exception.

All fifteen reports on the events in Poland were written by Venetian agents or by random informants, including the Venetian consul at Chios, Giovanni (Zuam, Joanne) de Tabbia (four reports); the Serenissima's secretary, Alvise Sagundino, sent to negotiate frontier issues with the Ottomans (three *dispacci*);⁸⁹ the captain-general of the fleet, Marchio Trevisan (two letters); and the *provveditore* of the fleet, Domenico Malipiero (two reports). Another four reports were by miscellaneous correspondents, such as the *provveditore* of Lepanto, Andrea Foscarini; the *provveditore* of Cattaro, Francesco Zigogna; the *bailo* of Corfu, Francesco Nani and, finally, two Florentines who had arrived to Venice from Poland.

Sanudo mentioned these last informants twice, in October and December 1497, and it is hard to believe that they were actually different persons.⁹⁰ Indeed, this duplication highlights a methodological problem. Due to the size and scale of his work, Sanudo was unable to update previous information on

87 Paolo Morawski, "Notizie delle future "Indie d'Europa": Polonia, Lituania e Moscovia nei Diarii di Marin Sanudo. Anni 1496–1519", *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, XXI (1987), 43–88.

88 See Carla Coco and Flora Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani alla Sublime Porta* (Venezia, 1985), 26 and 56.

89 Sagundino accomplished three missions in the Ottoman Empire in 1493, 1496 and 1497 see Maria Pia Pedani, *Elenco degli inviati diplomatici veneziani presso i sovrani ottomani* (Venezia, 2000), 17.

90 *I Diarii di Marino Sanudo*, I, 800 and 845–846.

a certain event. As a result, in many cases we are dealing with similar versions of the same testimony.

Moreover, in the case of the Polish campaign in Moldavia, the discrepancies between reports from different sources did not seem to have bothered Sanudo. These differences stemmed from the particularities specific to each document, whether it was a private or official report, the source of the information, the route by which it arrived, or the speed of news from departure to arrival in Venice, none of which seemed to concern the author to any degree. Sanudo simply copied the news as it reached him, making no effort to check its accuracy or to arrange it chronologically. In this latter respect, he sometimes mentioned a *dispaccio's* date of departure and when it arrived in Venice, but even so the data are fragmentary. For instance, Sanudo gave such details in only two cases for the Polish campaign of 1497, in the report of Alvisè Sagundino (written on 17 September 1497 and arrived in Venice *via* Corfu on 14 October)⁹¹ and the letter of Giovanni de Tabbia (sent from Chios on 24 October and arrived in Venice on 13 December).⁹²

The sender was sometimes simply an intermediary, forwarding to Venice information received from elsewhere. This is the case with letters sent from Pera on 2 July 1496, arriving at Chios and then forwarded to Venice on 18 July, where they finally arrived in September.⁹³ Other news through Chios was sent on 12 December 1497 from Constantinople, forwarded on 8 February 1498, reaching Venice in March.⁹⁴ If we compare this with other news which circulated from Constantinople to Venice *via* Chios, their sporadic nature becomes obvious. News from the Ottoman capital was one of the main responsibilities of the Venetian *bailo*, but after the expulsion in 1492, no one could replace his role of gathering information from the Ottoman Empire. This suspension of the *bailo's* activity also influenced the speed of news, slowing communications considerably. It took two or even three months for a letter to arrive from Constantinople, while by Pierre Sardella's calculations the average speed for the sixteenth century was 37 days.⁹⁵ An exception was the report by the Venetian

91 Ibid. 809.

92 Ibid. 846.

93 "Ancora vene lettere di Syo de Zuam de Tabia consolo, de 18 lujo, come havia lettere di Pera di 2 dito per lo ritorno di l'ambasador di maonesi da poi consignato il tributo al Turco" (Ibid. 295).

94 Ibid. 909.

95 Sardella, *Nouvelles et spéculations*, 56. According to Sardella, it took the slowest news 81 days to arrive from Constantinople to Venice while the fastest covered the same distance in 15 days.

secretary Alvise Sagundino, which covered the distance from Constantinople to Venice in 31 days, no doubt owing to the special status of the sender.⁹⁶

All this news seems to have followed the sea route. The land route was obviously less secure and in the absence of a permanent resident in Constantinople it was impossible for the Serenissima to maintain regular couriers. The exception was the news brought by the two Florentines, who left the Polish camp on 5 August 1497, arrived in Buda and then went onward to Venice, where they arrived on 5 December 1497. In this particular case, the news travelled no faster than its carriers, who covered the distance in the usual way, not as special couriers.

The differences in the speed of news explain some contradictions in the information gathered by Sanudo. News about preparations for the Polish campaign and its aim, the reconquest of Kilia and Akkerman, crossed over with later news, which arrived in Venice earlier, claiming that Christian forces had actually occupied the two fortresses. If we pay attention to the chronology of the Polish campaign, we soon notice that, according to the reports received in Venice, the ports fell before the war began! For instance, in August the conquest of Akkerman was taken for granted but at that moment Jan Olbracht's army was still in Poland.⁹⁷ The information brought by the two Florentines in December 1497 did not seem to change the Venetian view, since Sanudo continued to transcribe news which stated that the Polish crusade had been a great success and that the sultan was trembling in terror in Constantinople.

This false perception was likely connected directly to the source of information. An analysis of the fifteen reports about the Polish campaign reveals that the most accurate were those that bypassed the Ottoman Empire. Reports originating in Ottoman territory gave a distorted view of the situation, suggesting that the Porte was confronted with a serious crisis. For instance, in

96 "A di 5 zugno, vene lettere di Alvixe Sagodino secretario nostro, date in Constantinopoli a di 4 mazo" (*I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, I, 644). Sagundino's letter of 17 September 1497 needed less than a month, arriving in Venice on 14 October (*Ibid.* 809). Both reports contain information about the negotiations between the Porte and the Serenissima, which could explain their speed.

97 "Per lettere di Corfu di Alvixe Sagundino secretario nostro, el qual andava ai Signor Turcho per le cosse di Zupa, con la galia soracomito Lorenzo Loredam. Come, in quella note, che era a di 3 avosto, si doveva levar et navegar al suo viazo. Et che de li si verificava quello che, za alcuni zomi, per lettere dil capitano zeneral nostro da mar se intese, che Stephano de Mondavia Charabodam et ducha Ulacho, con ajuto dil re di Rossia, havia tolto per tratado Moncastro loco fortissimo situado su la bocha dil Danubio sul Mar Mazor, el qual el Turcho possedeva, et era sta suo. Per la qual cossa, el Signor havia fato comandamento a molta zente die dovesse cavalchar a la Porta." (*Ibid.* 740).

October 1497, by which time Jan Olbracht's real intention to attack Moldavia was already known, the *bailo* of Corfu, Francesco Nani, sent a report based on Ottoman information, claiming that the Turks had been defeated by a Polish-Moldavian coalition and that no fewer than five Ottoman commanders and 20,000 troops had been killed or captured.⁹⁸ Further instances seem to follow the same pattern. In December 1497, Florentine testimony estimated the Polish army at 100,000 men and added that Jan Olbracht had asked Stephen the Great's permission to cross Moldavian territory. This report was the only one which tried to give a broad perspective on the Polish campaign; the two Florentines also reported that, in parallel with Jan Olbracht's preparations for war, Hungary had negotiated a new truce with the Porte, an action perceived as very harmful to Polish interests.

Venetian perceptions of the Polish "crusade" seem to have undergone a radical change in March 1498; the conquest of Kilia and Akkerman, announced as a great success the previous year, gave way to a more realistic perspective. According to Giovanni de Tabbia, the Polish king had assembled a great army on the Ottoman borders and was determined to start the war, but eventually became ill and was forced to withdraw. As a result, the Ottomans also demobilised their army.⁹⁹ This new version of events, although much more realistic, completely ignored the dramatic turn in the Polish king's "anti-Ottoman projects." Moreover, this version seems to have been overshadowed by previous stories circulating in 1497. In April 1498 Sanudo copied another letter resummarising news from Poland. Once again, the news announced the preparation of an expedition against the sultan.¹⁰⁰

It is hard to explain how, five months after the Polish defeat by the Moldavian forces, anyone would still insist that the Poles were preparing a large-scale attack against the Porte with the support of a regional coalition. Sanudo noted only that the news came from Poland, giving no other details on the sender. The news names only the voivode of Moldavia and ignores other Christian princes. This fact, and the mention of the Tatar khan as a leader of the anti-Ottoman leagues seems to suggest that the sender was either confused by the news he had gathered or sought to create confusion by spreading false reports.

98 "... haveano auto una gran rota da li prediti polani el vlachi etc., presi et morti 5 flambulari. Et per altre vie, se intese esser stali roti et morti turchi 20 milia. Per le qual novità, el Signor era in gran spavento, et renovava il ... a le sue zente, perchè il voleva andar in persona in campo" (Ibid. 800).

99 Ibid. 950.

100 Ibid.

One can presume that the Venetians tried to collect reliable information but it is highly probable that all their intelligence came from Ottoman subjects. In one case, we have proof for this assumption: the letters of Domenico Malipiero, mentioned above, depended on reports by two *bazarioti* (men of bazaar), a term which suggests that the two informants were Muslim merchants. This detail strengthens the hypothesis that almost all news about the Polish crusade of 1497 was controlled by the Ottomans, who intended to project a distorted image of their empire. All information arriving in Venice saw the Polish preparations as a first step toward crusade, even if the Polish crown made no request in this respect to Pope Alexander VI.¹⁰¹

Another oddity is the view which the Venetian *dispacchi* take on the consequences of the Polish “crusade.” According to these sources, the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of catastrophe in 1497 as a result of the Christian offensive. Evidently, such reports to Venice were highly exaggerated, but similar views are found whenever the Ottomans were confronted with a difficult situation. In 1494–1495 many voices claimed that Charles VIII’s expedition in Italy had provoked great terror in the sultan’s European provinces. According to such views, Ottoman subjects from *Schiavonia*, *Albania* and even *Caramania* believed that the French king was preparing to attack Constantinople and hastily abandoned their countries.¹⁰² The sighting of several Venetian ships amplified the alarm, as they were mistaken for Charles’ fleet.

It is therefore no surprise that news of a Polish crusade could have provoked similar reactions in 1497. It is a *topos* amplified by the Venetians’ wishful thinking. The Venetian reports exaggerated the Ottoman preparations for war and the fright (*gran spavento*) caused by the coming crusade.¹⁰³ We may wonder why the Venetians preferred to delude themselves. One possible answer is that the “delusion” was not self-conscious. It is true that the Venetians were often blamed for distorting information, but one can hardly suppose that they were misinforming themselves.¹⁰⁴ It is more probable that in 1497 the lack of a Venetian *bailo* had a significant impact on the quality of reports sent to Venice.

101 Nowakowska, “Poland and the Crusade”, 134.

102 N. Iorga (ed.), *Notes et extraits pour servir à l'histoire des croisades au XV^e siècle*, v, (Bucharest, 1915), 233.

103 *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, I, 800.

104 See for instance the opinion of the Milanese informant Luca Luppo, in N. Iorga (ed.), *Acte și fragmente*, III, (Bucharest, 1897), 57–58; and the chronicle of the Florentine Benedetto Dei, according to whom the Venetians spread lies about a defeat inflicted on Mehmed II by the Ak Koyunlu lord Uzun Hassan (Ovidiu Cristea, “La chronique de Benedetto Dei sur la guerre moldo-ottomane, 1475–1476”, *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes*, xxxII (1994), 3–4: 375 and note 2).

Informants had few possibilities to verify their news and most information about the Polish crusade passed through Ottoman territories and was influenced by what the Ottomans wished to be known; thus, most reports mirrored more or less the same ideas.

Moreover, the Venetian “delusion” was a consequence of the Republic’s relations with the Porte, in which peace was undermined by distrust and tensions.¹⁰⁵ Any war between the sultan and other monarchs considerably diminished pressure on the Ottoman-Venetian border, as Marino Sanudo explicitly stated in summing up news about the Polish campaign. He considered that any such news was very good, not just for the Serenissima but for all Italy because the sultan would be forced to prepare himself for the attack and abandon any idea of invasion.¹⁰⁶ It is worth mentioning that the period between 1496 and 1497 saw a significant number of sea clashes between Ottoman and Venetian ships, a sort of prelude to the war which broke out in 1499. In such a context, it is possible that the sultan deliberately amplified the news and rumors about Jan Olbracht’s expedition. On the one hand, Bayezid tried to diminish the tension in relations with the Republic and to convince the Venetians of his goodwill towards them. On the other hand, the great number of reports about Ottoman setbacks aimed to create the image of a vulnerable empire and a weak sultan unable to take action against the Christians.

This hypothesis is difficult to prove, but there is some evidence in its support, such as the case of the *relazione* of the Venetian secretary Alvise Sagundino, who was present in the Ottoman Empire in 1497 to resolve some border issues. According to Sagundino, Bayezid II was a partisan of peace, mainly interested in food and all sorts of other pleasures rather than in war, a true friend of Venice whose reluctance about the establishment of a permanent *bailo* in Constantinople was not a sign of hostility, but a preference to keep secrecy about Ottoman affairs.¹⁰⁷ We may be astonished by such self-confidence expressed by a member of the Venetian elite who based his *relazione* on his own recent experience. Contradicting Sagundino’s testimony, from 1494 onward, tension increased continuously in Venetian-Ottoman relations. In 1496, three Venetian heavy galleys commanded by Bernardo Cicogna pursued an Ottoman

105 Ovidiu Cristea, “La pace tesa: i rapporti veneto-ottomani del 1484”, *Annuario di Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica*, v (2003): 277–286.

106 “La qual nova saria perfectissima per la Signoria nostra e tuta Italia, accio el Turcho atendesse a caxa soa et non li venisse pensier altrove” (*I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, I, 740).

107 “... amador de paxe debito più presto a la golla et altre volupta che a la Guerra” (ibid. 399); “e amico molto di questa Signoria; ma non vol haver baylo li per non haver spion che avisi de qui quello in quelle parte si fanno” (ibid. 397).

pirate. The Ottomans, in turn, prepared an expedition to hunt the Venetian corsair Niccolò Sommaripa in the same year.¹⁰⁸ Along with these naval clashes there was also suspicion in Istanbul about the Serenissima's support of the French expedition in Italy. All these minor incidents, rumors and doubts amplified the distrust on both sides and anticipated the conflict which broke out in 1499.

Besides the numerous confusions, distortions and inaccuracies in the news gathered by Sanudo about Jan Olbracht's campaign, there is also significant silence. Hungary seems to be completely ignored or mentioned only as a "small player" in the political context. No wonder that Moldavia's role is even less emphasised. Sanudo's *dispacci* describe Stephen the Great as a member of a large anti-Ottoman coalition, but totally ignore the evolution of Polish-Moldavian relations and the subsequent conflict. It was only in February 1499, no less than sixteen months after the battle of Kuzmin, that news reached Venice about the Polish defeat. According to a report *via* the island of Veglia, the king of Poland had been defeated because he was betrayed by the voivode of Moldavia. Stephen preferred to reach an agreement with the Turks and, with their help, surrounded and crushed the Polish army.¹⁰⁹

New Plans of Crusade

A few months later Venice received even worse news, which affected it directly. In June 1499, the sultan ordered the Ottoman fleet to begin attacks on Venetian possessions. After the conquest of Lepanto in August 1499, concern about the Ottoman threat grew in the West and was fuelled by alarmist rumors claiming that the Turks were about to land in Italy.¹¹⁰ Under the circumstances, in autumn 1499 Pope Alexander VI invited all Christian princes to send their envoys to Rome in March 1500 to discuss a general alliance against the Turks. His appeal mostly fell on deaf ears, so that the pope was forced to reissue the call for the crusade in February, with much the same results.¹¹¹ Alexander VI was not discouraged, however, and continued to take steps toward organizing a crusade. In February 1500, the pope imposed new taxes on Jewish property and on 1 June 1500, expecting significant income from the Jubilee proclaimed for

108 Documents concerning these episodes in Iorga, *Notes et extraits*, v, 230–231.

109 *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, II, 420: "questo perché Stephano de Valachia havia tradito il re di Polana et uno vayvoda di turchi si accordò con lui, et miser polani in mezo et fono roti".

110 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 514.

111 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, VI, 88.

that year, he promulgated the bull *Quamvis ad amplianda*. Enumerating recent Turkish successes and stressing once more the danger that they posed for the Christian faith, the pope issued a call to holy war, declaring that he was ready to accompany the Christian princes and spill his own blood if need be. He also established a new tax which all clergy, including cardinals, had to pay on pain of excommunication.¹¹²

The kings of Hungary and Poland welcomed Alexander VI's actions, especially since they saw in his crusade a chance to end their diplomatic isolation.¹¹³ In the autumn of 1499, the pope sent the Bishop of Cagli, Gasparo Golfi,¹¹⁴ to both kingdoms to enlarge the anti-Ottoman alliance already concluded between the Papacy, France and Venice. King Wladislas declared his interest in the proposal, but only if he also received financial aid and if other great powers in Christendom joined the alliance. Failing that, he preferred to maintain his truce with the sultan.¹¹⁵ At the same time, crusade plans remained an important topic of discussion in the Holy Roman Empire. In May 1500, Nicholas Rozemberg pleaded as the envoy of both Hungary and Poland before Emperor Maximilian in Augsburg on the need for a coalition against the Turks.¹¹⁶ On 22 May 1500, the Pope published two bulls of the crusade in favor of the two kings. The first granted them an ecclesiastical tithe, on condition that it be used for the crusade, and the second granted plenary indulgence to all inhabitants of the two kingdoms who went to fight in the crusade or who paid for its accomplishment.¹¹⁷ The two bulls arrived along with a letter from the pope, delivered by Gasparo Golfi, praising the two kings for their involvement in the crusade against the Turks and imploring them to proceed swiftly. The pope also gave his blessing to the king of Hungary's divorce, which was to have an important role in negotiations with the king of France.¹¹⁸ An anti-Ottoman

112 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 527; Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals and War*, 100; Poumarède, *Pour en finir avec la Croisade*, 38.

113 Krysztof Baczkowski, "Próby włączenia państw jagiellońskich do koalicji antytureckiej przez papieża Aleksandra VI na przełomie XV i XVI wieku", *Nasza Przeszłość*, 81 (1994): 10–20.

114 Kalous, *Papežští légati*, 355.

115 András Kubinyi, "The Hungarian State and the Papacy during the Reign of Jagello Kings (1490–1526)", *A Thousand years of Christianity in Hungary. Hungariae Christianae Millenium*, eds. István Zombori, Pál Cséfalvay, Maria Antoaneta de Angelis, (Budapest, 2001), 80.

116 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 473–476.

117 Augustin Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta Historica Hungariam Sacram Illustrantia*, II, (Rome, 1860), 547–551.

118 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 483.

treaty signed between France, Hungary and Poland on 14 July 1500 provided for a double matrimonial alliance, and Wladislas's marriage to a French princess directly affected Habsburg interests.¹¹⁹

A further diplomatic success came when Venetian envoys to Buda in spring 1500 undertook to subsidise the Jagiellonian campaign against the Turks.¹²⁰ Despite this agreement, it proved hard to make them keep their promises. Although papal proclamation of the crusade and the alliance treaties of 1499 offered a good opportunity to reconquer the northern Black Sea fortresses from the Ottomans, the situation proved to be much more complicated, influenced by the political interests of states in the region and the interplay of the various lesser alliances. The call to crusade was received in different ways, and there were wide discrepancies between political action, professed aims and true intentions. For instance, although the Hungarian nobility were eager to fight, the clergy preferred peace because of the share of the costs that they were expected to shoulder.¹²¹ Despite the important role assigned to king Wladislas and the cardinal's hat granted to the primate of Hungary, the crusade of 1500 caused very little stir in Hungary, compared to other similar events.¹²²

The call to crusade was received with interest in Poland,¹²³ and a group of crusaders (*crucesignati*), priests and monks massacred twenty Jews in Krakow before they set out to join the king against the Tatars.¹²⁴ The greatest benefit of the call to crusade in Poland was the tithe money collected for the war against the Turks, which Cardinal Fryderyk Jagiello diverted to fund defense against the Tatars under the doctrine of *subsidium charitativum*.¹²⁵ Poland was not at all well placed at the time to launch a new war against the Ottoman Empire, since it was also involved in the conflict between Lithuania and Muscovy.

Grand Duke Alexander believed that he could forestall further attacks from his Eastern neighbour by agreeing to an unfavourable peace in 1494, whereby he recognised Ivan III as "grand duke of all Russia" and married his daughter Elena the following year. As part of the terms of the wedding, Alexander promised that Elena would remain Greek-Orthodox and that there would be no attempt

119 Baczkowski, "Działność polsko-węgierskiej dyplomacji", 536–539.

120 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 128.

121 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 526.

122 János M. Bak, "Hungary and Crusading in the Fifteenth Century", *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century. Message and Impact*, ed. Norman Housley, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 126.

123 Smolucha, *Papiestwo a Polska*, 85.

124 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 264–265.

125 Papée, *Jan Olbracht*, 170–171.

to convert her to Catholicism even if she wished it.¹²⁶ In 1499 Ivan III accused the Lithuanians of pressuring his daughter and other Greek-Orthodox subjects of the Grand Duchy to convert, posing as the protector of Greek-Orthodox believers against forced conversion.¹²⁷ Grand Duke Alexander's envoy invited Ivan to join the Hungarian-Polish-Lithuanian alliance during negotiations in Muscovy in August 1499 and to come to the aid of Stephen the Great, since the grand duke had reports of the sultan's intention to attack and conquer Moldavia. Alexander declared his firm intention to defend Moldavia against the enemies of the Christian faith, together with his brothers, and warned Ivan that the Ottoman threat may soon target him too: "Voivode Stephen's realm is the gateway to all the Christian lands of our continent, and God forbid that he should be defeated and his land entirely occupied, for if that happened neither our realms nor yours would ever again have peace from that powerful enemy."¹²⁸

When the war with Muscovy started, Alexander Jagiello ensured that Stephen the Great would remain neutral—indeed this was the main aim of signing the treaty with Moldavia in autumn 1499.¹²⁹ Although the treaty was not yet signed at that moment, he had already set himself up as protector to Stephen. There was no threat to Moldavia, but Alexander's position had more to do with the recently gained significance of the anti-Ottoman alliance. From this point of view, he was coming closer to the position that Nicholas Rozemberg had advocated at the imperial diet the same year, when he had spoken in the name of all three monarchs about their intention to face the Ottoman threat.¹³⁰ Ivan replied that he was ready to come to the aid of his kinsman the voivode whenever he should request it, but that he had no such call for help from Stephen.¹³¹ This thwarted the grand duke's attempt to exploit the good relations between Moldavia and Muscovy for his own ends and to build the coalition against the Ottomans. The diplomatic defeat then led to open conflict between the two parties. On 14 July 1500 a Lithuanian army led by Constantin Ostrogski was defeated by the Muscovites at the battle of the Vedrosha river.¹³²

126 Fryderyk Papée, *Aleksander Jagiellonczyk*, (Krakow, 1949), 12–16.

127 Bazilevici, *Politica externă*, 377–379.

128 *Сборникъ Императорскаго Русскаго Историческаго Общества*, 35, (St. Petersburg, 1882), 281.

129 Papée, *Aleksander Jagiellonczyk*, 42.

130 В. А. Улианицки (ed.), *Материалы для истории взаимныхъ отношений Россіи, Польши, Молдавіи, Валахіи и Турціи* (Moscow, 1887), 144: "Dumque Valachia, Thaurica quoque Chersonessus, ceteraque provincie christiane rediebantur in seruitutem, obaudite fuerunt pereuncium finitimorum preces atque querele, presidia nostra deopescencia".

131 *Сборникъ*, 35, 284.

132 Bazilevici, *Politica externă*, 381–384.

Under these circumstances the king of Poland received a request for aid from Lithuania, while at the same time Poland was faced with devastating attacks from Mengli-Girey, an ally of Ivan III. Jan Olbracht had abandoned any negotiations about an anti-Ottoman crusade.¹³³ In a letter of November 1500, Jan Olbrecht explicitly connected Ivan's attacks to the actions of the sultan in order to justify his lack of involvement in the anti-Ottoman coalition and his use of funds for non-crusading ends.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, Poland felt a certain amount of pressure from the Ottoman Empire as well. Faced with the prospect of a crusade, Bayezid sought to counter any coalition of Christian princes through diplomacy. Two initiatives are of importance: he sent an envoy to Rome in February 1500, and brought pressure to bear on the king of Hungary to renew the peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁵

The king of Poland sent an envoy to Istanbul in 1499 to conclude a truce, who returned with an Ottoman envoy just as negotiations for the crusade seemed to be yielding concrete results. Under these circumstances, Jan Olbracht fell into line with his brother the king of Hungary and on 1 March 1500 swore an oath before the Ottoman envoy undertaking to keep the peace until a peace should be agreed between the sultan and the king of Hungary.¹³⁶ This was, however, merely a temporary solution and not a lasting change to relations with the Ottoman Empire.

The uncertainty in Krakow at the time is reflected in a letter from the Florentine Octaviano Gucci, who revealed that Jan Olbracht was increasingly inclined to sign a truce with the sultan, especially after the Tatar campaign. Gucci wrote that the voivode of Moldavia had gathered his army at the borders but he did not know what Stephen intended to do, since he was both an ally of Poland and a friend of the grand duke of Muscovy.¹³⁷ This shows that the Polish court had taken into account the possibility that Stephen might attack in an alliance with Ivan and, given previous experience, that they might have Ottoman support. These fears were allayed by the summer of 1500. The voivode of Moldavia refused to pay any further tribute to the Porte and ordered the blinding of the Ottoman envoy who had come to collect the money owed. He also sent one of his commanders with an army to raid and burn the surroundings of

133 Biskup, "Polish Diplomacy", 129.

134 Smolucha, *Papiestwo a Polska*, 87–88.

135 Inalcik, "The Ottoman Turks and the Crusades", 349.

136 Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Relations*, 207.

137 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 30–31.

Akkerman and Kilia, and there were even reports that an Ottoman army led by one of the sultan's sons had been defeated and two sanjakbeys killed.¹³⁸

Given that Poland's drift away from the crusading project was becoming increasingly obvious, the king of Hungary accordingly paid more attention to Moldavia. News reached Venice that Wladislas had asked the pope to send envoys and letters to Moldavia.¹³⁹ Venetian sources also report that the pope "*mandara li breievi e il jubileo ai valachi*" and "*lui à publichà il jubileo; manda uno comissario in Moldavia*".¹⁴⁰ In September 1500, Alexander VI published the bull *Gradiente domino*, granting plenary remission of all sins to all citizens of Moldavia who took part in the crusade in person for a year, or for at least six months, or who paid to support the war.¹⁴¹ Catholic clergy were instructed to preach the contents of the bull to the people, and the pope entrusted the Bishop of Cagli, Gasparo Golfi, to oversee the indulgence and prevent any attempted fraud.¹⁴² Since the voivode of Moldavia was Greek-Orthodox, the papal bull was strictly diplomatic a measure (unlike in Poland and Hungary) so that the bishop's presence might not have been of great use.

At the same time, preparations for the great campaign against the Turks were going ahead at diplomatic level. On 5 October 1500, three legates *a latere* were elected in consistory: Raymond Peraudi for Germany and the Nordic kingdoms, Juan Vera for France, England and Spain, and Pietro Isvalies for Hungary, Bohemia and Poland. Isvalies, the Cardinal Archbishop of Reggio, was tasked with reaching an understanding between the Jagiellonian kings and Venice, if it should prove impossible to build an alliance between all Christian princes.¹⁴³ He was a soldier by profession and governor of Rome before being created cardinal, and was a close confidant of the pope's son Cesare Borgia.¹⁴⁴ In November 1500, the pope appointed Isvalies apostolic legate for Hungary, Poland and the "adjacent provinces." The pope's plan envisaged three years of war against the Turks, waged by three main armies. A powerful fleet was to be

138 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 368–369.

139 Eugen Denize, "Ștefan cel Mare în *I Diarii* lui Marino Sanudo", *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, xxii (2004): 144.

140 *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, III, 879 and 883.

141 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/2, 476–481.

142 *Ibid.* 480.

143 Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, II, 531–532; "Nam si pro desiderio nostro expeditio generalis per omnes principes Christianos peccatis nostris facientibus fieri non possit, nos tamen et Majestas sua si voluerit, ut optamus, etiam rex Christianissimus ac Hungarie et Polonie reges illustrissimi, et dominium Venetorum omnes contra Thurcos consociati dictam exequutionem auxiliante Domino suscipiemus" (*ibid.*, 532, note 101).

144 Kubinyi, "The Hungarian State and the Papacy", 80.

assembled by the Holy See, France, Spain and Venice to attack the Turks by sea. The first land army would set out from Germany, led by the emperor, while Wladislas and the papal legate together would lead the second army, made up of Hungarian, Polish and Moldavian forces. The pope promised Hungary an annual subsidy of 40,000 ducats from the Holy See and 100,000 from Venice.¹⁴⁵

Between Crusade and the Defence of the Greek-Orthodox Faith

The pope continued to include Poland in his plans, hoping that Jan Olbracht would join the anti-Ottoman league once he had solved the problems on his eastern border. In December 1500, the Venetian ambassador in Buda sent news that Stephen the Great would intercede between Alexander of Lithuania and Ivan of Muscovy, in the hope that war could be averted and that this would reveal Poland's true intentions regarding the campaign against the Turks.¹⁴⁶ The information in the report was true, summarising earlier discussions between Stephen and Wladislas of Hungary, on the one hand, and the kings of Poland and Hungary, on the other hand. The substance of all these discussions can be found in a letter which Wladislas sent to Jan Olbracht on 23 November 1500.¹⁴⁷ The letter is largely concerned with the truce which the sultan had offered to Poland. Wladislas warmly advised his brother to accept the truce for one year or two at the most, given the problems which he faced, to win time to settle these other matters. Thereafter he could join the Christian coalition. In the latter part of the letter Wladislas discussed three problems connected to Moldavia, two being concessions to the voivode and the third an offer that Stephen had made. The concessions were a commission to assess Stephen's Pokuttya (a bone of contention between Poland and Moldavia), and the disposal of pretenders to the Moldavian throne who had sought refuge in Hungary and Poland. Wladislas wrote that Stephen had offered in turn to lay to rest any Polish suspicions that he might join forces with Ivan III. Stephen had assured Wladislas that he was no enemy to Alexander, and that the dispute between Moldavia and Lithuania was minor and had been settled by Ivan's intervention. He offered to send an envoy to Muscovy as proof of his good intentions in an attempt to persuade Ivan to abstain from any attack on Lithuania.¹⁴⁸

145 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, II/2, 456–467.

146 Denize, "Ștefan cel Mare în *I Diarii*": 144–145.

147 Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 487–481.

148 "Ad negotium vero illustrissimi domini magni ducis Lithuanie fratris nostri charissimi cum duce Moskovie habitum, taliter respondit et vehementer iuravit ac deum protestatus

We may note here that Stephen had offered to mediate in the conflict between Muscovy and Lithuania, and that while this offer to Wladislas fits in with the attempt to bring Poland back into the framework of the crusade, it also brings immediate advantage to Moldavia in the form of the concessions that Poland must make. Thus, in March 1501 Jan Olbracht ordered the pretender Elias, son of the former voivode Peter Aaron, to be beheaded in the presence of Stephen's envoys.¹⁴⁹ Correspondingly, the king of Poland was obliged as part of this diplomatic deal to agree to a commission of inquiry which would examine the voivode of Moldavia's claims to Pokuttya; since the problem of the Polish-Moldavian border had not been included in the treaty of 1499, it had to be resolved by some other instance. This issue was not dealt with immediately, and in time it led to a new conflict between Poland and Moldavia. When Moldavia became involved in resolving the conflict between Muscovy and Lithuania, this showed the close collaboration between Stephen the Great and his sovereign the king of Hungary and the trust Wladislas placed in the voivode.¹⁵⁰ We may also see further proof of this collaboration in the many Moldavian envoys sent to Buda in January 1501 to discuss the king's plans for the war against the Turks.¹⁵¹ Shortly afterwards two of Stephen's envoys arrived in Venice, where they sealed Moldavia's part in the crusade by agreeing to an alliance between Venice and Hungary.¹⁵²

est se nunquam etiam minutissimam causam illius dissidii inter eos fuisse, nec unquam eiusmodi ipsius ducis Moskovie factum in hoc probasse, et ideo obtulit se missurum notabiles suos oratore sad eundem ducem Moskovie et ejus medio taliter se apud eundem laboraturum, ut a talibus suis factis et guerris contra ipsum dominum ducem fratrem nostrum omnino absteat" (Lewicki, *Codex epistolaris III*, 489).

149 *Scriptores Rerum Polonicarum*, II, 265.

150 "De li Valachi disse questi zorni era ritornato un suo orator da Stephano Vayvoda di Moldavia, quali li avea affermato per nome del prefato Vayvoda, che se la Maestà del Re fa questa impresa contra el Turco, et se movrà ancora lui in suo subsidio potentissimo. Et ancora mi ho parlato con ditto oratore quale è Siciliano nominato Domino Brancho, et è prete et medego, promette cose molto grande de cadaun de questi do Valachi, dil Transalpino etc. Et de questo Stephano di Moldavia disse insuper chi potesse adaptar o cum pace o cum treuga le differentie che sono tra el Duca di Moscovia et el Duca di Lituania, qual al presente è fatto Re di Polonia, et è suo zenero, tutti concoreriano sicuramente a questa impresa, et chel Turco certamente non basteria resistarli, et che la Maestà del Re era de opinione mandarlo in Polonia et Moscovia per questo effecto, insieme cum un nuntio dil R^{mo} Cardinal Legato di Hungaria, il quale per nome del Pontefice procurasse ancor lui questo instesso" (Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, VIII, 34).

151 Pârvan, *Studii*, 195.

152 Denize, "Ștefan cel Mare în *I Diarii*": 145–146.

A resolution of the Muscovite-Lithuanian conflict had already been mentioned as a common goal in autumn 1500. In January 1501, Wladislas's envoys arrived to Muscovy, and those of his brothers of Poland and Lithuania arrived in February. However, Wladislas's arguments did not sway Ivan in the least, and the only notable result of the delegations came when the Polish-Lithuanian envoys obtained a truce to last until "greater envoys" arrived.¹⁵³ The Hungarian envoy spoke of Wladislas's intention to go to war against the Turks in defense of the Christian faith and mentioned Stephen the Great's name in this context, aiming to show that it was not just in the interest of Catholic states and that the war between Muscovy and Lithuania harmed all Christendom.¹⁵⁴ The stakes were high here; Wladislas's embassy had achieved no results, yet the pope had instructed Cardinal Isvalies that Jan Olbracht had to make peace or at least conclude a truce with all his enemies in order to wage war against the Turks.¹⁵⁵

Stephen had taken on a difficult task given the victories that Ivan had already obtained and his crushing defeat of the Lithuanian army in July 1500. The pretext for that war was another major difficulty for the voivode; Ivan had made it into a religious conflict by claiming that his daughter was being pressured to convert from Greek-Orthodoxy to Catholicism in breach of the Russian-Lithuanian peace treaty of 1494. Ivan thereby set himself up as the defender of Greek-Orthodoxy and was able to channel the discontents of many Greek-Orthodox magnates who had left Lithuania to join his side, among them Feodor Ivanovich Belski, Elena Stefanovna's cousin and her confidant at the court in Muscovy.¹⁵⁶ Confessional identity also played an important role in Stephen's own relationship with Ivan, enabling the dynastic marriage of their children in 1483. When the princeling Dimitri, Elena Stefanovna's son, was made heir to the throne of Muscovy, the bond between his grandfathers, Stephen and Ivan, only became stronger.¹⁵⁷

Stephen in turn had first appealed to Ivan in terms that evoked Greek-Orthodox solidarity.¹⁵⁸ Therefore he found that he had to proceed with the utmost caution if he was to settle a conflict that had been launched "for the

153 Bazilevici, *Politica externă*, 393–394.

154 *Сборникъ*, XXXV, 303.

155 Oscar Halecki, *From Florence to Brest (1439–1596)*, (Rome, 1958), 117.

156 Nancy Shields Kollman, "Consensus Politics: The Dynastic Crises of the 1490s Reconsidered", *Russian Review*, 45 (1986), 3: 250–251.

157 Dana Picková, "Mezi Moskovou a Suceavou (Přispěvek k dějinám rusko-moldavských diplomatických vztahů na přelomu 15. a 16. století)", *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Philosophica et Historica. Studia Historica*, 11 (1998): 38.

158 *Исторические связи народов СССР и Румынии в XV- начале XVIII в.*, 1, (Moscow, 1965), 1, (Moscow, 1965), 63.

defense of Greek-Orthodox Christendom.” The voivode proved to be a canny diplomat, as we see from the message he sent with his clerk Costea in spring 1501. We may corroborate the content of the message by reference to the persons and events mentioned, and thereby understand Stephen’s approach to such tricky matters as the religious divide which represented a serious obstacle to collaboration between Catholic and Greek-Orthodox princes, even in a matter of general interest such as the Ottoman threat. When Stephen told Alexander of Lithuania that he had not been able to win any concessions from Ivan, he reminded him that he had indeed breached the Russian-Lithuanian treaty and that he continued to do so: “And yet, for all that, you have not bethought yourself to keep your word, and you have sent a renegade from the Greek faith to his daughter; you have sent the bishops of Smolensk and of Vilna, and Bernardine monks, with the intent that she should abandon the Greek faith and convert to the Latin faith. And you have sent these same bishops of Smolensk and of Vilna to the Russian *knyazi*’ and to the boyars and to all Russians who keep the Greek faith, to speak to them on your behalf and convert them to the Latin faith.”¹⁵⁹

The “bishop of Smolensk” was in fact Metropolitan Joseph of Kiev. When Metropolitan Macarie was killed by the Tatars in 1497, Joseph became a candidate for the metropolitan see and turned to the Patriarch of Constantinople for recognition, asking approval for his project of restoring the Union of Florence in his diocese. Patriarch Nifon II approved the proposal and only insisted that the Greek rite be preserved. When Nifon was deposed, the new patriarch, Joachim I, did not hesitate to confirm Joseph as Metropolitan in May 1498. In Oscar Halecki’s opinion, this shows that Joachim already knew of Joseph’s position on the problem of union with Rome.¹⁶⁰ Joseph’s attitude was well known and had been since 1498, when Feodor Shestakov wrote to *knyaz* Boris Mihailovich that, “There has been great consternation here, my lord, between the Latins and our Christians. The Devil is at work in the Bishop of Smolensk and also in the renegade Sapieha, making mischief against the Greek-Orthodox faith; the Grand Duke is urging our lady, the princess Elena, to convert to the cursed Latin faith.”¹⁶¹

However, Joseph’s position on church union only officially became known in August 1500, after the defeat at Vedrosha. He sent a letter to Rome recognizing papal primacy, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, and the legitimacy of the Council of Florence as the eighth ecumenical

159 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 451.

160 Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*, 112.

161 *Документы объясняющие историю западно-русского края* (St. Petersburg, 1865), 26.

council.¹⁶² Stephen the Great took note of events in Lithuania by referring to Joseph as the Bishop of Smolensk rather than the Metropolitan of Kiev, showing that he did not recognise him as a legitimate metropolitan. Similarly, to call him a “renegade from the Greek faith” was a deliberate diplomatic snub to his efforts toward church union, seeing in them an abandonment of the Greek faith (*zakon*) for the Latin faith rather than as a symbiosis of the two. Stephen comes out strongly against the idea of church union, showing that his involvement in the crusade had nothing to do with any ecumenical spirit.

A sizeable proportion of Catholic clergy in Eastern Europe saw matters in much the same way. In this context, Jan of Komorowo described the argument between prelates and the representatives of the Observant Franciscans. The regular clergy insisted that Greek-Orthodox Ruthenians had to be rebaptised before they could be received into the Catholic Church, while the friars argued that no such rebaptism was needed and that converts only needed to recognise the pope as the sole head of the church and promise obedience to him. They could thus be received in Catholic churches without rebaptism and there was no obligation to receive all the sacraments in order to be considered true Catholics.¹⁶³ A few years later the Krakow theologian Joannes Sacranus published a virulent pamphlet setting out a number of reasons why Ruthenians could not be considered true members of the Catholic Church.¹⁶⁴

Of greater interest here is Alexander VI's approach to the question. The pope did not respond to Metropolitan Joseph but rather wrote to Alexander of Lithuania to tell him that Joseph's proposal was unacceptable since he was not legitimately a bishop, having been confirmed by the Patriarch of Constantinople, who was the sultan's loyal servant. Though the pope considered that he had to send a nuncio to look at the situation, the Lithuanian ambassador in Rome, Erasmus Vitellius, replied that Ivan would consider any mission from Rome as reason to intensify his war against Lithuania.¹⁶⁵

Under these circumstances, Stephen recommended that Alexander of Lithuania respect the terms of the Muscovite-Lithuanian treaty of 1494, and gave a formal assurance that he would continue his efforts to restore peace.¹⁶⁶ The Moldavian envoy in Muscovy made it clear that there would be no joint military action against Lithuania, and reminded that it had been Ivan himself who had insisted on the peace treaty between Lithuania and Moldavia, which

162 A. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae*, II, (Rome, 1861), 267–268.

163 *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, v, 263–264.

164 Johannes Sacranus, *Errores atrocissimorum ruthenorum*, (Köln, 1508).

165 Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*, 116–119.

166 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 451–452.

Stephen was minded to respect. The voivode told Ivan firmly that all of the Western monarchs intended to set out against the Turks, and recommended that he too should make peace with his fellow Christians and ride out against the pagans: "All of the Christian kings and princes from all parts of the West and the Italian lands have united and are preparing to set out against the pagans, and it would be good if you too would keep peace with the Christians and take arms against the pagans."¹⁶⁷ This call to arms clearly reflects Stephen the Great's position at that moment; he saw the crusade against the Ottomans as far more important, ideologically speaking, than Ivan's claim that he was "defending Orthodox Christendom." This aspect shows that though Moldavia and Muscovy had the common bond of Eastern Orthodoxy, their political interests were otherwise different. Sadly, Ivan's response to the embassy's message is not preserved, though it seems that relations between Moldavia and Muscovy were broken off from that moment forth. Later documents show Stephen more concerned with setting a date for the border commission to meet than with settling the Muscovite-Lithuanian conflict.

Further developments were to complicate the political situation in the region even further. In June 1501 Jan Olbracht died, and his brother Alexander was elected to the Polish throne shortly thereafter. This prolonged the uncertainty as to whether Poland would join the crusade. In January 1501, Nicholas Lanckoronski had been sent to Istanbul to conclude a truce with the sultan. On 19 July 1501 the sultan ratified the treaty, which was open-ended in duration and favourable to Poland.¹⁶⁸ These favourable terms were granted on account of the fact that on 13 May 1501, Wladislas of Hungary had officially announced his adherence to the anti-Ottoman alliance, so that the sultan had a strong interest in depriving him of one of his most important allies. After Jan Olbracht's death, the truce was null and void, and Nicholas Firlej was sent to Istanbul once more, this time concluding a five-year truce which the sultan granted on 9 October 1502.¹⁶⁹ The haste to conclude a truce with the Turks was also motivated by the fear that Hungary and Venice might do the same and that the sultan would then attack Poland once more.¹⁷⁰ Lanckoronski, the previous envoy, had offended Stephen, who would only allow the embassy to cross Moldavia *en route* to Istanbul if a different envoy was named.¹⁷¹ Furthermore, the coronation of Grand Duke Alexander of Lithuania as king of Poland directly implicated his

167 *Исторические связи*, I, 84.

168 Papée, *Jan Olbracht*, 173–174.

169 Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Relations*, 112.

170 Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 127.

171 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 456.

new kingdom in the war with Muscovy. Likewise, the religious adherence of Elena Ivanovna became a far greater problem now that she was to be queen of Poland. In November 1501 the pope warned the bishop of Krakow that if Elena refused to convert to Catholicism, the king would have to end the marriage.¹⁷²

Any attempts to persuade Ivan to renounce hostilities against Alexander Jagiello were doomed to fail from the start, which on the one hand explains Stephen the Great's reluctance in this respect. On the other hand, there was clearly a cooling-off of relations between Stephen and Ivan, though the causes were unrelated. When the *knyaz* Ivan Yurevich Patrikev was disgraced, this undermined Prince Dimitri's position as heir to the throne and he was sidelined in favor of the *knyaz* Vasili. Ivan imprisoned Elena Stefanovna and her son, then initially denied to Stephen that he had done so before offering a weak and insincere explanation.¹⁷³ Muscovite envoys returning from Rome were detained in Moldavia for two years, showing that Stephen in turn felt certain hostility toward Ivan.¹⁷⁴

Discussions on Crusade in Muscovy

In December 1501, the Moldavian envoy Șandru, who had been sent to Krakow to congratulate the king on his coronation, sought safe-conduct to travel onward to Muscovy, where his task was to convince Ivan to call off the war against Poland and unite with the other Christian princes against the Ottomans. His main purpose in travelling, however, seems to have been rather different; he was to enquire into the fate of Stephen's grandson Dimitri, since it was reported that he had been disinherited; this is the only feasible explanation as to why Stephen would make the Polish embassy's passage onward to Istanbul conditional upon his own envoy being allowed to go to Muscovy.¹⁷⁵ A further argument for such an explanation is the Polish king's refusal of the request, declaring that Stephen's envoy would be allowed onward only once all hostile action on the Moldavian-Polish border had ceased.¹⁷⁶ In the end any attempt by the grand duke to send an envoy was likewise doomed to failure;

172 P. Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint Siège. Etudes diplomatiques*, I, (Paris, 1906), 240.

173 Kollman, "Consensus Politics", 258.

174 Сборникъ, 35, 324; G. Bezviconi, *Contribuții la istoria relațiilor româno-ruse* (Bucharest, 1962), 43.

175 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 445–446.

176 Gorovei and Székely, *Princeps*, 384.

Nikita Nardukov was killed on the Western steppe as he headed for Moldavia.¹⁷⁷ Communications between Moldavia and Muscovy became indirect, mediated by khan Mengli-Girey. In January 1502, the Muscovite envoy in the Crimea informed Ivan that Stephen had asked the khan to stay at peace with Hungary, Poland and Lithuania.¹⁷⁸ Although Moldavian envoys were forbidden to cross Poland-Lithuania to reach Muscovy, in August 1502 Alexander Jagiello was still talking of Stephen's involvement in his dispute with Muscovy.¹⁷⁹

The settlement of the Muscovite-Lithuanian conflict only became a problem again in mid-1502, when a general offensive against the Turks was underway. In April of that year Alexander Jagiello had assured Venice that Poland would join the anti-Ottoman campaign once the war against the Muscovites and Tatars was over.¹⁸⁰ A large-scale diplomatic mission was underway and preparations took some time; Wladislas and Cardinal Isvalies wrote letters in July 1502, but the envoy did not arrive in Muscovy until 29 December.¹⁸¹ Wladislas's initiative was greeted with optimism in Poland. Cardinal Fryderyk wrote to his brother Alexander in August 1502, after receiving an envoy from Wladislas, that he was convinced that the Hungarian envoy could persuade Ivan to give way. Fryderyk believed that papal authority, Hungarian strength and the general interest of Christendom all represented solid arguments that would make Ivan grant a truce.¹⁸²

The mission was entrusted to Sigismund Zanthai.¹⁸³ He was accompanied by the chaplain Dietrich, with a message for Ivan from a broad Christian coalition headed by the pope, followed by Cardinal Isvalies and the kings of Hungary and Poland.¹⁸⁴ The papal letter, dated 1 November 1501, uses standard formulations rather than being addressed by name or by title, opening with the phrase "to our beloved son, good health and the apostolic blessing." This

177 Gustave Alef, *The Origins of Muscovite Autocracy: the Age of Ivan III*, (Weisbaden, 1986), 264.

178 Улианицки, *Материалы*, 193.

179 "Pari modo ad Romanorum regem mittendi reminiscitur M. sua, sic enim in Nova Civitate dicebatur, quod cum legatione aliquis mittendus esset ad illum mediocris, qui tanquam eundem effectum haberet, quem legatio papalis habitura esset, apud quem palatinus Walachiae, ut verosimile est, promovet negotium Moscovitae" (Papée, *Acta Aleksandra*, 122).

180 Papée, *Acta Aleksandra*, 71–72.

181 *Сборникъ*, 35, 341.

182 Papée, *Acta Aleksandra*, 137–138.

183 Dana Picková, "Russisch-Litauischer Krieg 1500–1503 im Lichte der diplomatischen Tätigkeit König Wladislaws von Böhmen und Ungarn", *Prague Papers on History of International Relations*, VI (2002): 49–53.

184 Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint Siège*, I, 250.

shows that it cannot have been written specifically for Ivan, but was given to the legate to use as and when it might be needed. The pope drew the recipients' attention to the danger that the Turks represented to Christendom and wrote that he has sent his legates to all Christian princes, urging them to join the defense of the Christian faith. The recipient was invited to follow the example of Jan Olbracht of Poland, and unite his forces with those of the other Christian princes.¹⁸⁵ Jan Olbracht was of course dead by that point, but the letter was cast in very general terms and had a symbolic rather than specific value, through the fact that it came from the pope. However, Sigismund Zanthai gave the pope's message much more nuance when presenting it to Ivan. He spoke of the Ottoman threat but also of the possibility of reconquering "the Greek empire of Tsarigrad," and said that the pope had empowered Isvalies to assemble for that purpose a coalition between the kingdoms of Hungary, Bohemia and Poland, the grand duchies of Lithuania and Muscovy, and the military orders of Prussia and Livonia.¹⁸⁶

We may note that Zanthai's speech contains certain elements which do not feature in the instructions he was given. It is also surprising that Moldavia does not feature in the list of states taking part in the crusade, though this may be explained by one of the instructions given at Buda. Wladislas told Zanthai that if Ivan asked why he had had no envoys from Stephen the Great, he was to answer that as far as he knew the voivode had wished to send envoys but that Alexander of Poland had not allowed them to travel through his domains and had expelled them since he was no friend to Stephen or Ivan. If Ivan did not ask, Zanthai was not to mention it at all.¹⁸⁷ This confirms that diplomatic relations between Moldavia and Muscovy had been interrupted, while the warning not to mention Moldavia unprompted served to protect Alexander of Poland.

However, Alexander himself had given Zanthai different instructions on this subject in September 1502 at Minsk. If asked why Stephen had sent no envoy to Muscovy, he was to answer that the voivode had been busy with matters to do with the crusade and was still busy, since his realm neighboured that of the

185 *Сборникъ*, 35, 341–342.

186 *Ibid.* 344–345.

187 "Item si dicetur quare vaivoda Moldaviensis etiam suos oratores non misit ad ducem Moscoviae, dicat, quod propterea non misit, quia causabatur et conquestus est nobis, quod libenter misisset, sed ipse D. Rex Poloniae non permisit eos ire per terras et dominia sua sed ipsos repulisset, quod illi vaivode et etiam duci Moscoviae multum displicuit. Et dato etiam, quod ibi de hoc non interrogaretur, tamen ipsi Sigismundus Zanthai nihilominus hoc introducat" (Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 148; Улианицки, *Материалы*, 209).

Turks.¹⁸⁸ He was to add that in such an important matter as a general crusade, the Holy See first approached the kings, who were the defenders of the faith and of the universal church, and only thereafter turned to the other princes. Hence the kings had already agreed on the crusade, but such an undertaking required peace and Stephen's envoys were acting in the matter where needed.

We may note that reference to Moldavia gave Zanthai the chance to mention the subject of crusade, and mention that a Greek-Orthodox prince was taking part. He was then to go on to refer to the canon law that formed the basis for crusade, and the risks of opposing the crusade, which ran from spiritual sanction through to attack by the coalition of other Christian princes. As Bazilevici notes, the purpose of the embassy was not to persuade Ivan to take part in the crusade, but rather to make him surrender the Lithuanian territories he had occupied.¹⁸⁹ Thus he must be convinced that he faced a powerful coalition of Catholic princes supported by the voivode of Moldavia, whom Ivan had looked to as an ally. Mentioning Moldavia in this context would hasten the worsening of relations between Moldavia and Muscovy, and it was Alexander Jagiello's policy to undermine these wherever possible. Further proof here is the rumor that Stephen's daughter and grandson had fallen out of favor, which Stephen sought to confirm through Khan Mengli-Girey.¹⁹⁰

For all that, Sigismund Zanthai did not mention Moldavia at all in his speech in Muscovy, for which there are two possible explanations. The first concerns an incident which took place during his embassy. Zanthai handed over his letters of accreditation on the first day and presented the pope's message, with discussions to be resumed the next day. That evening he sampled Russian hospitality and their vodka, so that on the second day he sent a message that he would be unable to take part in talks as he was ill, so that the chaplain Dietrich

188 "Si interrogabit, cur vayvoda Moldaviensis oratores suos non miserit, vel si dicetur, an cum vayvoda Moldaviensi negotium illud etiam practicandum erit, aut si est practicatum vel dictum, qui vicinus est Turcis etc. Ad utrumque illud una fit responsio, quia Sedes apostolica negotia maxima, prout illud est expeditionis generalis, primum cum regibus qui protectores sunt fidei et universalis Ecclesiae agit et expedit, postea super eisdem cum aliis principibus sit consultation. Itaque domini ser^{mi} isti reges ad expeditionem consentient, prout vellent, dummodo paternum illud dominium pacificarent. Tandem et cum vayvoda Moldaviensi et cum alii concludetur, quid finaliter et qualiter faciendum erit, exinde demum oratores vayvodae ubicunque necesse erit, et vocabuntur et venient et similiter V.D.I^{me}" (Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 149–150).

189 Bazilevici, *Politica externă*, 421.

190 *Сборникъ Императорскаго Русскаго Историческаго Общества*, 41, (St. Petersburg, 1884), 466.

took on his role.¹⁹¹ The second explanation concerns another event which took place between the moment when Zanthai received his instructions and when he set out for Muscovy. Although he received his instructions from Alexander of Poland around 20 September, he did not set out for Muscovy until he received Ivan's safe-conduct. The Moldavian-Polish border commission was to meet on 29 September 1502, but since the Polish delegation did not arrive to attend this meeting, for the third time, Stephen the Great occupied Pokuttya in October, causing consternation in the region. On 7 November, Mihail Krzyczky broke the news of Stephen's invasion to Alexander of Poland at Vilna, and declared that there was an imminent risk of losing all Podolia.¹⁹² Alexander wrote to his brother Cardinal Fryderyk, who had stayed behind in Krakow, expressing his fears that if Stephen were to attack the south of the kingdom this would imperil action against Ivan. Alexander was optimistic in this respect, believing that Wladislas and the pope would support him in a victory which would allow him to dedicate himself to holy war, and he had given Sigismund Zanthai detailed instructions as to how to answer questions in Muscovy.¹⁹³

The Peace

Zanthai left for Muscovy after 11 November 1502, and we can be sure that Stephen's actions were already known at this point. Given that the magnates of Poland were now talking of the voivode's treachery and "wicked trickery", any mention of Moldavian involvement in the crusade would no longer have served the Polish-Lithuanian cause, but would have furnished Ivan with an argument as to why he should favor his dynastic rights over the crusade. Moreover, Ivan struck exactly this note in his response. Though he declared his support for the

191 *Сборникъ*, 35, 346; Pierling, *La Russie et le Saint Siège*, 1, 250.

192 Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 183–184.

193 "Quidquid tamen dextera Dei concedet futurum, M. R. timet, quia Walachus eas caedes, eas quoque congressiones sentiens, molietur invadere terras Regni animo impediendi M. R. in actione contra Moscos. Unde non ab re esset, quod etiam rex Hungariae innotesceret hoc illi, quod et s^{mus} dominus noster papa per legatum et M. ipsa R. per se media pacis quaerant belli illius sedanti, ut ille etiam spe conficiendea pacis quiesceret, et se postea converteret conditionibus aequis ad expeditionem contra paganos, nam tanquam amore expeditionis sanctae contra paganos studiosi pacis sumus. Forsan in Mynsko stabit M. R., donec respondebit Sigismundus de Moscovia, quid fecerit cum illo duce, vel quid ille praetendat ad perorata, aut donec ex conflictu generali eventus videbitur belli. Si interim iustissimus Deus nostris concedet victoriam, tutiori via itum esset sive ad pacem sive ad ulteriora belli molimina" (Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 162).

liberation of Constantinople and the Christian empire from the hands of the infidel Turks, and agreed that peace was needed among Christian in order to counter Turkish victories, he gave a firm answer on the conflict with Lithuania: “The pope must judge for himself, does the king act well when he wages war against us for a land that is not his?”¹⁹⁴ A few months earlier Stephen had declared that Pokuttya had belonged to Moldavia since ancient times and that if the Poles would accept this, they would be able to proceed together against the Tatars and other pagans; the Polish envoy reported that in saying so he “sought to place himself above the lords of all Christendom.”¹⁹⁵

In such a situation, Alexander of Poland had no option but to complain to his brother, through Erasmus Ciolek, admitting that Sigismund Zanthai’s mission had failed in part and accusing an alliance of “schismatics” and pagans of working against him, in the hope that Wladislas would not support Stephen’s claims.¹⁹⁶ Zanthai’s mission had played an important part in the negotiations in Muscovy, when Ivan specified that he had accepted a six-year truce at the request of his daughter, the pope and the king of Hungary, but would keep most of the Lithuanian territories which he had occupied in previous years.¹⁹⁷ From Alexander Jagiello’s point of view, the truce was more a defeat than anything else. Ciolek sent a message to the pope in which he too wrote of a nefarious alliance between infidels and schismatics working against the kingdom of Poland, thereby justifying the use of crusade tithes by reference to Poland’s great efforts as a shield against the Turks, the Tatars and the schismatics.¹⁹⁸ One such diversion of funds happened when money collected in the diocese of Gnezno

194 *Сборникъ*, 35, 351 and 354.

195 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 461.

196 “Etenim paeter ea, quae dni oratores praedicti proposuerunt fraternis M^{ti}s v, R^{ae} favoribus absolvenda pro felicitate Regnorum, ser. D. meus rex gratio^{mus} commisit referre, quia v. M^{ti}s dom, Sigismundus Zanthai, suae quoque Ser^{ti}s oratores redierunt ex Moscovia, et licet pax fuerit ad certum tempus confecta, tamen tyrannus ille una cum affine Walacho Tartoros et alios hostes paganos subordinant contra M^{tem} suam. Sic uterque scismaticorum eorundem confoederationes cum paganis eisdem faciunt, ut dominia paterna M^{tum} v. et praesertim Lithuaniae ducatum occuparent. Unde est, quod Tartarus omni tempore non cessat vastare Regnum illud. Walachus Stephanus, quid fecerit et modo faciat, V. M. ex allis intellexit” (Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 284).

197 Papée, *Aleksander Jagiellonczyk*, 67–75.

198 “Et forsitan non erit impossibile cogitari, ut Sanctitus sua propter illud sanctum piumque opus aliquas gratias (remittendorum peccaminum) ad illa Regna concederet, et ex collectis inibi elemosynis populus provideretur duceretque novus ad fines Regni iad arcendosque paganos et defendendos christianos, qui tanquam fessi non omnino sufficiunt ex hac parte maximis imperatoribus, Turco, Tartari set scismaticis resistere, quibus tamen per multa temporum centena viriliter resistebant Poloni. Sed christianis principibus Turco in regionibus diversis cedentibus, cum aucta esset ingentissima potestas Turcorum,

was used to ransom Polish subjects from Ottoman captivity.¹⁹⁹ Despite this rhetoric against schismatics, Alexander's wife remained Greek-Orthodox and the king's project of church union was likewise a failure.²⁰⁰

Stephen the Great was indeed coordinating his actions with Khan Mengli-Girey, though not in the way of which Alexander Jagiello had accused him. The king of Poland had called on the Tatars from beyond the Volga for an alliance against Muscovy and had asked Stephen not to attack.²⁰¹ However, Sheikh Ahmed's envoy to Poland announced in 1502 that the sultan had invited his khan to settle around Akkerman and Kilia in order to dominate Moldavia together with the Ottoman armies under Malkoçoğlu Bey. The envoy reported that Bayezid had told to Sheikh: "If you hold Moldavia, we will be free to move against any part of the world."²⁰² Under the circumstances, Stephen and Sheikh Ahmed's rival, Khan Mengli-Girey, began to coordinate their actions.²⁰³ A further factor was Cardinal Fryderyk Jagiello's mis-handling of the Moldavian-Polish border issue, which provoked a virulent reaction; Stephen accused the cardinal of incompetence and ill will.²⁰⁴ After Sheikh Ahmed was defeated and sought refuge in Lithuania, Mengli-Girey's raids on Lithuania continued from 1503–1506 and peace was restored once Sheikh Ahmed, was imprisoned at Kaunas at the khan of Crimea's request.²⁰⁵ These alliances with the Tatars illustrate the complexity of political relations in the Northern Black Sea region and the importance of the sultan's role.

This situation was officially confirmed at the end of the crusade. Suffering from grave financial problems, Venice asked the sultan for peace late in 1502. Without Venice's subsidy, the crusade could not continue, and during 1503 Wladislas of Hungary negotiated a truce with the sultan. It is interesting

impossibile fieret uni Polonae nationi ferre labores et opera defensionis fere communis, nisi novis gentibus, novis quoque accessionibus adiuta est" (Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 279).

199 Papée, *Akta Aleksandra*, 280.

200 Halecki, *From Florence to Brest*, 121.

201 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 458.

202 "Turcus vult quod Zavolhensis veniret ad campos Kilie et Byalogrod et dominaretur Walachie, quodque Turcus quatuormilia cum Malcocz et quatordecim basschas et duo milia equorum imperatori dare vellet: Si tu Walachiam tenebis, nobis liberum erit progredi ad omnes partes mundi. Theloneum byalogrodensem imperatori Turcus dedit" (Улианицки, *Материалы*, 195).

203 *Сборникъ*, XLI, 469–470.

204 Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, 460–462.

205 Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania. International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th–18th Century)*, (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011), 29–30.

that according to some Venetian sources the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia seem to have played an important part as mediators between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.²⁰⁶ The treaty included not only the Hungarian kingdom but also Wallachia and Moldavia with their princes²⁰⁷ and its conclusion was received with relief not only in Hungary but also in Venice.²⁰⁸

Pope Alexander VI did not oppose this since Hungary's participation in the crusade had proved to be of very little use when set against the large sums expended.²⁰⁹ A seven-year general peace between Christendom and the Ottoman Empire was ratified on 20 August 1503 in Buda and on 5th November 1503 in Istanbul.²¹⁰ As well as the kingdom of Hungary and the other lands of St Stephen's crown, including Wallachia and Moldavia (which were to be ruled as an Ottoman-Hungarian condominium), the treaty mentioned the beneficiaries of the peace as the pope, the Holy Roman Emperor, the kings of France, Spain and England, Venice and the whole of Italy, and the grand master of the Knights of Rhodes, and the island of Chios. The treaty recognised Ottoman rule over fortresses which the Turks had conquered, among them Kilia and Akkerman with their adjacent territories.²¹¹ Thus Ottoman rule at the Eastern border of Christendom was achieved after almost a century of confrontation and was recognised by the Christian powers. Political thought of the time began to consider that peaceful coexistence with the Ottomans was possible. Also in 1503, Andrea Gritti, the Venetian envoy in Istanbul reported that the

206 See the several mentions made in *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, IV, ed. Nicolò Barozzi, (Venice, 1880), col. 373, 415, 792, 860 and *Ibid.* V, ed. by Federico Stefani (Venice, 1881), col. 450: "Item come li a Constantinopoli era uno messo dil re di Hongaria; et che era sta tratà la paxe e fati li capitoli tra el re di Hongaria e il Signor turcho per via di Rado et Stefano valachi, videlicet questi valachi di pagar il charazo al Signor, senza voler però di esso re." See also the documents from the *Archivio di Stato* in Venice published and commented by Alexandru Simon, "Valahii și domnii lor în războiul veneto-otoman (1499–1503)", *Anuarul Institutului A. D. Xenopol*, 50 (2013): 58–59; *Idem*, *Pământurile crucii. Românii și cruciada târzie*, (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane), 2012, 232–235.

207 *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, IV, col. 880: "Item, quod ista pax sit prò nobis atque regnis nostris, signanter Hungariae, Bohemiae, Dalmatiae, Croatiae, Sclavoniae etc., ac marchionatu Moraviae, et ducatu utriusque Slesiae et Lusacie, nostris regnis Moldaviae et transalpinensi, cum vayvodis ipsorum Karabogdam (= Stephen the Great) et Radul (= Radu the Great, prince of Wallachia) ipsorumque filiis et haeredibus".

208 Simon, "Valahii și domnii lor": 58–59: "Nui vedemo in optimi la conclusion de dicta pace"; Simon, *Pământurile crucii*, 234.

209 Pastor, *The History of the Popes*, VI, 100–102.

210 Kolodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 112.

211 Hurmuzaki, *Documente*, I/2, 20–21.

sultan wished to avoid war with Venice.²¹² Likewise, the Polish envoy, Nicholas Firlej, insisted that Poland had to avoid any kind of open conflict with the Ottoman Empire.²¹³ Certainly the Ottoman threat to Christendom continued to play an important role in political and clerical rhetoric, but at the level of political activity, it became evident at the end of the fifteenth century that the Ottoman Empire was accepted as a legitimate power and a diplomatic partner.

212 Lester J. Libby, "Venetian Views of the Ottoman Empire from the Peace of 1503 to the War of Cyprus", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 9 (1978): 106.

213 Janusz Smolucha, "Ordo Imperii Turcorum. Nieznana relacja z poselstwa do Turcji", *Prace Historyczne*, 126 (1999): 82.

Conclusion

According to late Ottoman sources, in 1484, during the siege of Akkerman, a certain Italian, named Colon, requested the sultan's support in his quest for new territories. The episode is evidently mere legend and ultimately it is not of any significance whether Christopher Columbus visited Bayezid II at Akkerman. It is interesting to notice, however, that the sources establish an implicit connection between the conquest of the Black Sea and the discovery of the New World a few years later.

From the mid-thirteenth to the fifteenth century, the Black Sea played a major role in the long-distance trade between Europe and Asia. The Fourth Crusade, the fragmentation of the Byzantine Empire, and the rise of the Mongol Empire created favourable conditions for the penetration and expansion of Western merchant powers in this inner sea. Thus, for two centuries, the Pontic area became the crossroads of civilizations and trade. During this period, commodities from China and the Near East as well as from Northern Europe and the Mediterranean Sea converged towards Caffa, Trebisond, Pera, and other important ports on the Black Sea. The lively flow of merchants and merchandises was stimulated both by the removal of Byzantine "protectionism" and by the opportunities created by *pax mongolica* in the Black Sea, but from the mid-fourteenth century the commercial flourishing came to a stagnation.

It is worth noticing that the economic development was doubled by an increasing political interest of Western power in the area. Until the beginning of the thirteenth century, the Black Sea was a marginal front for the crusades directed to Holy Land, a situation which changed drastically after the rise of Muslim powers in Asia Minor and north Black Sea shores. These new circumstances, together with the interest of several Christian maritime powers (Genoa, Venice) or land powers (Hungary, Poland) for the Black Sea created the conditions for opening of a new crusading front. Venice was a key factor in this process as the fall of Latin Empire in 1261, followed by the Mamluk conquest of Acre in 1291, consistently weakened its positions in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result, Venice supported most crusading projects while pursuing its own political and economic interests. From 1261 until the end of the thirteenth century the main target of its policy was the Byzantine Empire. In a second phase, during the first half of the fourteenth century, Venice focused on the emerging Turkish emirates of Aydin and Mentеше, whereas after 1360 the Venetians tried to content the Ottoman expansion. In contrast, Genoa, the archrival of the Venetian Republic, considered the crusading projects to be harmful to their own interests in Eastern Mediterranean and pursued a different policy. Thus,

in the second half of the thirteenth century Genoa supported the Byzantine Empire but later, from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards, colluded with the rising Ottoman power in order to strengthen its positions in the Black Sea region. Such a collaboration was made possible by a common enemy (Venice) and by the presumption that the Byzantine, and, later, the Ottoman maritime power was no match for any Western fleet.

While the Western maritime expansion in the Black Sea region started in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, the progress of Latin powers on land towards the Black Sea shores was slow and encountered serious resistance. A first period of expansion encouraged by the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland ended abruptly in 1241 with the Mongol invasion which inflicted a severe blow to both Catholic realms. Both kingdoms launched their renewed offensive towards the east only from the mid-fourteenth century, when the Golden Horde's hegemony on the Lower Danube began to fade. Until then, Hungary and Poland assumed the defense of the eastern border of Christendom but this claim was more a rhetoric statement rather than a historical reality. During the final years of Louis of Anjou's reign, which coincided with the dynastic union between Hungary and Poland, the Tatar domination at the Lower Danube collapsed. New political entities, namely the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, emerged afterwards. As a result of the energetic foreign policy of King Louis of Hungary, Central Europe became once again connected to the Black Sea area and its resources.

Unlike the Baltic frontier, defined by a permanent crusade against the pagans and schismatics, the Pontic frontier was not militarised, although the idea of relocating the Teutonic Order in the Black Sea region against the Ottoman expansion was discussed several times during the fifteenth century. Given this context, the control over the north-western Black Sea shores represented an important stake for the connection with the international trade as well as for its strategic value. Although he was confronting the Ottoman threat in the Balkans, King Sigismund of Luxembourg manifested a constant interest in keeping control over the Kilia fortress and in ensuring the connection between Kilia and Caffa. His plan was to use Kilia as a base for naval operations against the Ottomans who were threatening Constantinople. John Hunyadi renewed the project and took control over Kilia in 1448, but eventually failed in his attempts to support the Byzantine Empire.

In the first half of the fifteenth century, the Ottoman presence in the Straits disrupted the normal circulation of ships, compelling merchants to search for an alternative route. In these new circumstances, the goods from the East were transported by sea to Kilia and Akkerman, then by land through Moldavia, Hungary and Poland, towards Western Europe. The new route was preferred

by travellers and emissaries and sometimes even by diplomats, such as the Byzantine deputations heading towards Italy. The conquest of Constantinople by Ottomans in 1453 marked the end of the maritime route and the beginning of the Ottoman economic hegemony in the Black Sea. From this point on, Kilia and Akkerman remained the final two strongholds controlled by the Christians in the Pontic area. Their main importance was strategic, as opposed to economic. Both cities were considered gates to Christendom and outposts for an expedition against the Ottomans aimed to reconquer Caffa and Trebizond.

After the Ottoman conquest of Kilia and Akkerman in 1484, Western projects to regain Caffa faded away in parallel with the quest for new eastward routes and the shift of the international commerce to the Atlantic. As a result, political and economic developments at the eastern border of Christendom had a significant impact on the evolution of the Western Europe, a fact which might explain a paradox: The Westerners seem to have feared the Ottoman threat more than people from the Eastern Europe.

The Ottoman threat and the crusade were topics frequently used during the fifteenth century in Church rhetoric, political documents, literary works, or private correspondence. Themes such as: the fear inspired by Turks, the need for Christian solidarity, the defense of the faith, and the fight for the cross were associated by contemporaries with political events, millenarian beliefs, apocalyptic prophecies, astronomic events, and astrologic predictions, a fact which reveals a close connection between crusade and the religious piety. However, there is a striking contrast between the rhetorical use of the crusade and the concrete results of the crusade in the fifteenth century. To be sure, the crusade as a political and military movement must be seen differently, both from a religious and a political perspective, even when the line of separation between them is sometimes blurred. By doing so, the historian avoids the trap of confounding rhetorical claims with historical reality. Before the Ottoman threat, the crusade represented a state of mind and an ideal, whose purpose was the recovery of the Holy Land, but at the same time the crusade was an extremely powerful political instrument in periods of crisis.

From the canonists' perspective, in the fifteenth century the pope alone could sanction the holy war against the infidels, because he was the only one who could grant plenary indulgencies. There were, however, exceptions and even attempts to limit the role of the Holy See in the preparations of a crusade. Although the project proposed by George Podiebrad, an adept of the moderate Hussitism, did not have a significant impact, the discourse of Paul Wlodkowich at the Council of Konstanz, who argued that the pope had the right to proclaim the war against the infidels only for the Holy Land, was received with great interest.

This would explain why later in the fifteenth century there were Christian rulers who undertook military actions without the Pope's formal involvement. Such was the case of Charles VIII's expedition in Italy: considered as a first step of a major campaign against the Ottoman Empire, it ended only with a temporary conquest of Kingdom of Naples. Further, John Olbracht's "crusade" of 1497 was directed, theoretically, against the sultan but ended with an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Moldavia.

However, after the failure of the campaign, the Polish king had to ask for the Holy See's support. The role of the pope in initiating the holy war was acknowledged even by the Greek-Orthodox princes. Thus, one may understand why the Byzantines have decided to negotiate the union of the Church with the pope and not with the Council of Basel. During the fifteenth century, the popes not only proclaimed the crusade, but also offered financial support and were militarily involved in the anti-Ottoman actions. Therefore, Pope Alexander VI was an active participant together with the Christian princes in the anti-Ottoman projects, and this is why he was included in the peace treaty with the sultan in 1503. It was a new position of political influence for the papacy, anticipating the Holy League from the sixteenth century.

A major role assumed by the Papacy in the negotiations for a joint anti-Ottoman action was the mediation of conflicts between the Christian princes. However, the papal representatives were not always skillful diplomats, able to deal with complicated political issues. Sometimes the papal legates took sides in a dispute between two realms, thus compromising any common attempt against the infidels. It was the case of Jeronimus Lando who openly expressed his support for the Teutonic Order, provoking the King of Poland's dissatisfaction and, eventually, the failure of his mission.

In turn, Balthasar of Piscia, who was supposed to settle a truce between Hungary and Poland, acted as the defender of Mathias Corvinus, despite the fact that the Hungarian king was the one who refused to send deputies for negotiations. Moreover, the legate's decision to excommunicate King Casimir IV of Poland worsened the Polish-Hungarian enmity. Later, to the dismay of the Polish court, Gasparo Golfi publicly denounced the misappropriation of the funds of the crusade, which were used to defend the kingdom of Poland against the attacks of the Tartars.

Cardinals Giuliano Cessarini and Marco Barbo proved to be more successful. Cessarini managed to attenuate the antipathy of the Polish clergy towards the pope, persuaded King Wladislas and John Hunyadi to denounce the peace treaty of Szeged, and successfully mediated an agreement between Wladislas and the Habsburgs. Still, by focusing exclusively on the dynastic litigations, cardinal Cessarini failed to take into account the interests of the Polish kingdom,

which explains why so few Polish nobles actually took part in the crusade of Varna. In turn, Marco Barbo arbitrated successfully a Hungarian-Polish truce, as he was aware that some sensitive issues had to be postponed. The bone of contention was Moldavia, claimed as a vassal realm by both kingdoms. Eventually, the papal support for Matthias Corvinus' claims determined the failure of the negotiations and of a common Hungarian-Polish military action against the Turks.

Such examples suggest that many East-Central European political realities were almost unknown in Rome, an aspect which makes plausible Gustave Alef's assertion that the West discovered Eastern Europe much at the same time as America. The pope's plans for the East denote a clear misunderstanding of its political situation. First, he wanted to gain Muscovy's support for the projected crusade by the marriage between Ivan III and Zoe Palaiologus, and then planned for an alliance between the Christians and the Tartars. On both issues the Holy See seems to have given total credit to the allegations of Gian Battista del Volpe, an adventurer who did not have Ivan III's consent to open such negotiations. The idea that the great *knyaz* of Muscovy could receive the crown and the title of King of Russia from the pope's hands raised many concerns in Poland, whose king was also lord of Russia. Moreover, an alliance with the Tartars against the Ottomans was doubtful as any Tartar army crossing Christian territories required the approval of the princes from the region.

Venice had an important role in triggering these diplomatic actions in Central-Eastern Europe and was, to a great extent, responsible for their final failure. Engaged beginning with 1463 in a long war with the Ottomans, the Republic of Saint Mark was in a desperate search for financial and military support and, from this perspective, any ally and any military diversion were considered useful.

Such was the case of the outbreak of the war between the Ottomans and Moldavia in 1473. Although at the time Venice had only a vague knowledge about Moldavia and its prince, the Republic endorsed the prince's cause with the pope, asking for financial and military support. Moreover, in 1476, on the eve of an Ottoman expedition led by the sultan himself, Venice was prepared to offer shelter to the prince and his family. Also, on account of Stephen the Great's military successes against the Turks and their allies, there was a rumor in Italy according to which the Moldavian prince was hired as a *condottiere* by the Venetians.

From 1473 onwards Venice backed the idea of an anti-Ottoman front at the Lower Danube, and consequently its diplomatic actions in Rome, Buda and Krakow were aimed to help the Prince of Moldavia in his struggle against the Ottomans. The most spectacular step was the so-called "Scythian project" meant to involve Khan Ahmed's Tartars in the fight against the sultan.

Nonetheless such plans had no serious outcome and, in the end, Venice submitted to Mehmed II's peace terms of in 1479. Afterwards, Venetian interest in the region diminished abruptly, as did its involvement in the crusade.

The Serene Republic was by no means the only Christian power to have used the crusade for its own purposes. Other realms involved in the fight against the Ottoman Empire resorted to various recurrent *topoi* of the crusading rhetoric such as the commitment to fight for the defense of Christian religion and for the triumph of the Cross. Such discourses aimed to mark a clear distinction between the true warriors of Christ and the false Christians labeled as enemies of true faith and as friends of the infidels.

King Sigismund of Luxembourg, who skillfully made use of the Ottoman threat and the crusade, strengthened his position both in his realm and in his relations with the neighbouring states. Despite the disaster of Nicopolis, Sigismund asserted his role as a champion of Christendom against the Ottoman threat, as a promoter of the crusade and of the union of the Church. These claims were only a part of his far more complex foreign policy. In 1410, for instance, Sigismund condemned in harsh terms Poland's attack against the Teutonic Order, but a little while later he concluded an agreement with King Wladislas Jagiello in which he sacrificed the interests of the Teutonic Order in Poland's favour. Nonetheless, the agreement was never put into practice, and the end result was an increased Hungarian-Polish rivalry, in which both sides used the Ottoman threat as a political weapon.

Sigismund's policy was continued by John Hunyadi and Matthias Corvinus. For Hunyadi, who knew how to take advantage of his victories and to overcome the military setbacks, the fight against the Turks was an opportunity for a spectacular political ascension and to accumulate wealth. His son, Matthias Corvinus, became king of Hungary and secured his throne, threatened by the Habsburgs and the Jagiellonians, using the crusading rhetoric. According with Matthias's political discourse, Hungary was in a permanent state of war with the Turks, a true outpost of Christianity. His claims were readily accepted by the papacy who considered Matthias as the champion of Christendom. However, in contrast to his father, King Matthias adopted a cautious approach and avoided any serious combat with the Ottomans, preferring to wage small-scale confrontations. Even so, he was able to present such small results as important victories, while in other cases he took advantage of events from the neighbouring regions. Such was the case of the battle of Vaslui (1475), when an Ottoman army was annihilated by the prince of Moldavia, Stephen the Great, a success depicted in the Hungarian king's letters as his own triumph.

It should be noticed, however, that the prince of Moldavia used the crusading rhetoric as a tool to gain political prestige as well. In the first years of his reign and until the beginning of a war with the neighbouring Wallachia

in 1470, Stephen was a tributary prince of the sultan. Stephen joined the anti-Ottoman camp only in 1473, at a moment when he had no other alternative, and it was obvious that the sultan was going to punish him for the expedition in Wallachia. The unexpected victory of Vaslui against an important Ottoman force considerably increased Stephen's fame and enabled him to play a significant role in the region. Prince Stephen resorted to the crusading rhetoric according to the specific political context: either to blame the kings of Hungary and Poland for their lack of support against the infidels, or to use the alliance with the Ottomans against Christians, as he did during his war with Poland (1497). The defense of Christendom before the Ottoman threat was a key element in Stephen's political rhetoric, and he skillfully played upon the Polish-Hungarian rivalry, thus consolidating his international standing.

From the perspective of a Greek-Orthodox prince who took part in the crusade and from the way in which the Eastern Christians understood the Catholic crusade, Stephen's case is revealing. For the Greek-Orthodox Christians the crusade did not have the same religious connotations as for the Catholic princes. The absolution given for the participation in the crusade was based on the pope's role as St. Peter's successor and Christ's vicar on the one hand, and on the existence of Purgatory on the other hand. With the Union act of Florence, the Greek-Orthodox had theoretically accepted the two notions, but the document had nevertheless remained a dead letter. In Eastern Europe the religious union did not have any noteworthy consequences, because of the opposition from the local clergy and because of the conception that each Christian had to live and die in the confession with which he was born. The Greek-Orthodox considered the crusade as an expression of Christian solidarity faced with the Ottoman threat and accepted the pope's leading role in initiating the crusade and uniting Latin Christianity in a coalition. In his message to Sixtus IV, Stephen the Great acknowledged the essential role that the pope had to play, but also pleaded for the necessity of assembling all the anti-Ottoman forces, including those of Khan Uzun Hasan. The papal's grant of some crusading bulls for Moldavia was not motivated by the acceptance of the religious union, as some scholars stated. In fact, misguided by the Venetian and Hungarian diplomacy, the pope made a mistake, believing that Stephen the Great was a Catholic prince. The prince of Moldavia had no interest in the spiritual rewards offered by the pope, his purpose being only to obtain financial support. The relationship between the Moldavian prince, the Holy See, and the crusade had a strict political dimension, the spiritual compensations being valid only for the Catholics who fought by Stephen the Great's side. As for the Greek-Orthodox, the spiritual dimension of the war was preached by

the clergy of Moldavia. The Moldavian Church was responsible for sanctifying the war against Ottomans and for the use of eschatological elements about the myth of the “last emperor”. In turn, the prince made a display of religious zeal, the military campaigns being followed by the massacre of infidels, while the victories were celebrated with fasting and prayers. It is hard to determine to what extent these gestures were a strategy to motivate his warriors or a reflection of Stephen’s own religious beliefs. The fact that his descendants considered him as a saint leads us to incline towards the latter, but we assert that the two options are not mutually exclusive.

The existence of a form of a Greek-Orthodox piety for the religious war does not justify the use of the concept of “Orthodox crusade”. The idea of an Orthodox common military action against the Ottomans, different from the Catholic crusade, and whose purpose was to reconquer Constantinople and to free the Orthodox from Ottoman domination, is more recent and appeared within the context of Russia’s imperial expansion. In the fifteenth century, the Greek-Orthodox princes did not display such ambitions. Their common faith had brought Stephen the Great and Ivan III together, but their joint actions were aimed at Poland, not the Ottomans. Furthermore, despite their shared confessional and ethnic identity, the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia were most of the times in opposite camps, as a result of their divergent political interests. The reconquest of Constantinople was not a part of Stephen the Great’s strategy. His minimal objective was to preserve Kilia and Akkerman, while his greater ambition was to recover Caffa and Crimea, two key points for controlling the Black Sea.

In turn, Ivan III considered the crusade as instrument of the papacy and had no interest to join the anti-Ottoman fight. His conflict with Poland worsened the matter, as in those circumstances any project of a regional coalition was doomed to fail. Even the warning expressed by a Hungarian ambassador that the *knyaz* could be perceived as an enemy of the crusade had no effect with the Russian prince. Ivan III rejected the threats and replied that the king of Poland could not control territories that did not belong to him. However, despite their antipathy towards Catholicism, both Greek-Orthodox princes considered the involvement in the crusade to be the only viable reaction to the Ottoman threat. Stephen the Great’s message to Ivan the Great highlights this necessity clearly. The Moldavian prince invoked the imperative Christian solidarity—of Greek-Orthodox and Catholics alike—against a common foe. It is worth noticing that a similar argument was previously used by Ivan III; this appeal to the same terms suggests that even for princes with no interest in the fight against the Turks the crusading rhetoric was a useful instrument.

In their diplomatic correspondence, the fifteenth century princes were very generous in enouncing moral principles and attitudes that professed their duty to defend Christendom against external enemies. Most of the time, however, their noble intentions were merely mirroring the transformation of the crusade into a political ideology. Deceit was evidently part of the diplomatic and military game. Wladislas Jagiello sent his troops to fight against the Ottomans at a moment when he was convinced that Sigismund of Luxembourg would not break the truce with the sultan. Later, Jagiello dismissed Sigismund's claims over Moldavia, arguing that Prince Alexander participated in the campaign to which Sigismund himself had failed to be present. In 1476, Jagiello's son, Casimir IV acted much in the same manner. The king concentrated the army near the border with Moldavia, but withheld the battle orders. Thus, Mehmed II was able to retreat from Moldavia, and King Casimir seized the opportunity to reproach the fiasco to the king of Hungary. The expedition from 1487, led by John Olbracht, had the aim to reconquer Kilia and Akkerman. At the last moment, the campaign was diverted against the Tartars, as Poland could not afford to wage a war with the Ottomans at that point. Ten years later, John Olbracht initiated a new expedition with the same aim, but rumor was that the actual purpose was to remove the prince of Moldavia from the throne. Stephen the Great seemed interested in the king's campaign against the Turks, but, at the same time, he asked for the sultan's help and informed him about the hostile intentions of the Polish king. The result was the defeat of the Polish army by a Moldavian-Hungarian-Ottoman coalition. Confronted with the Moldavian-Ottoman retaliations, John Olbracht asked for the Christian princes' help, addressing the Roman-German emperor. While he was discussing the crusade with the Polish and pope's emissaries, Emperor Maximilian congratulated the prince of Moldavia for the victory he had won together with the Turks, demanding him to continue his actions against Poland.

Secret agreements, especially with the Ottomans, are often mentioned in contemporary correspondence and in most cases the accusations cannot be proved. There is information attesting to such agreements and clues that some rumors were not simple allegations. The Ottoman diplomacy was active and tried to use to good advantage the rivalries and the dissensions between the Christian princes. There is also one more reason why the conflicts between the Ottomans and the Christians cannot be reduced to the simplistic scheme of the confrontation between jihad and crusade. Usually these interpretations were influenced by the propaganda of the time and by the historical interpretations of the nineteenth century. The sultans' pragmatism on religious issues and the fact that the ideology of the "holy war" became influent in the Ottoman society only in later centuries demand a cautious approach to this issue. The

Ottoman chronicles refer to the 1476 campaign in Moldavia as “holy war”, aimed to revenge the honour of Islam. However, Mehmed II’s actions were far more complex than mere retaliation, and the sultan was concerned with the echo of his actions within the Christian world. The crushing defeat of the Ottoman army led by Suleyman Pasha at Vaslui, in January 1475, inflicted a strong blow to the sultan’s prestige, because the Ottoman army had been slaughtered by a small principality that was also tributary to the sultan. Stephen the Great’s victory eroded the fame of the Mehmed the Conqueror and the myth of the Ottoman invincibility. Before attacking Moldavia, the Ottomans had conquered Caffa, which was more vulnerable than Moldavia and whose conquest had a far wider reverberation in the Christian world. By renewing his message of peace and friendship to the king of Poland, Mehmed II announced that it was not his intention to conquer Moldavia, but only to replace the prince. Eventually, despite a military victory, the sultan was compelled to retreat from Moldavia, avoiding the trap set for him by the Hungarian, Moldavian, and Polish forces. In 1476, Stephen the Great proposed an ambitious strategy to defeat and destroy Mehmed II with the help of the Hungarian and Polish armies. The plan was to draw the sultan into the interior of Moldavia, where he would be surrounded by Hungarian troops coming from the south-west and Polish troops from the north-east. Significant numbers of troops were raised in Hungary and Poland for that purpose but the plan failed because the Christian armies did not synchronise their movements. Thus, the voivode was forced to confront the sultan in the battle of Războieni (Valea Albă), where he was defeated and driven back. Hearing that the Hungarian army was approaching (while the Polish contingent had made camp at Lwow until after the confrontation was over), the sultan quickly retreated from Moldavia. The Ottoman rearguard was attacked and defeated in Wallachia by Hungarian and Moldavian troops; Vlad the Impaler was installed on the Wallachian throne. Facing the perspective of failure, Mehmed II started a new expedition and reconquered fortress Sabac, stripping Matthias Corvinus of the “great victory” from the previous year. The sultan preferred an easy victory against an important adversary and abandoned the idea of a new campaign to punish the prince of Moldavia. Unlike him, Bayezid II, given the fact that he needed a military expedition but was unable to provoke an important adversary from the Christian world, launched the “holy war” against Moldavia, attacking Kilia and Akkerman.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century we notice an ever growing interest of the Christians for the organisation of the Ottoman state and the dignitaries who made political decisions. Much at the same time the idea of avoiding a military conflict with the Ottomans and of solving the disputations diplomatically was expressed. This approach already had a long tradition. At the beginning

of the fifteenth century, Wladislas Jagiello has established diplomatic relations with the Ottomans and even tried to negotiate the peace between them and the Hungarian kingdom. Due to the conflict with the Teutonic Order, the king of Poland was suspected of heresy and accused of having a secret agreement with the Turks. Jagiello's attitude, lacking the religious zeal of the converted, can be explained within the political circumstances from the eastern border of Christianity, a point of contact between religions and civilizations. Jagiello abandoned the territorial expansion based on the rhetoric of defending Christendom, while the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian union signalled a new climate of religious tolerance towards the Greek-Orthodox, Armenians, Jews, and Muslims. Furthermore, the Ottomans were far away from Poland, and the immediate danger came from the Tartars, who were direct adversaries for supremacy in north-eastern Black Sea. Still, the reconciliatory attitude towards the Ottomans persisted throughout the fifteenth century, even given their closeness to the boundaries of the Polish kingdom. After the fall of Kilia and Akkerman, when consulted about the opportunity of a new expedition against the Ottomans, the grand master of the Teutonic Order advised the king to choose peace, because it ensured prosperity, whereas war brought only suffering and destruction. There is a possibility that the grand master was influenced by the fear that the Order would be transferred from Prussia to northern Black Sea shores. His words reflect, nevertheless, an important truth, namely the huge costs of a permanent war with the Ottomans. It was a solid enough reason for the ideology of the crusade to lose more and more ground in favour of political pragmatism.

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